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New York

President:	Miss Durrant	(Jamaica)
Members:	Bangladesh	Mr. Chowdhury
	China	Mr. Shen Guofang
	Colombia	Mr. Valdivieso
	France	Mr. Levitte
	Ireland	Mr. Corr
	Mali	Mr. Ouane
	Mauritius	Mr. Gokool
	Norway	Mr. Kolby
	Russian Federation	Mr. Gatilov
	Singapore	Mr. Mahbubani
	Tunisia	Mr. Jerandi
	Ukraine	Mr. Krokhmal
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir Jeremy Greenstock
	United States of America	Mr. Cunningham

Agenda

Children and armed conflict

Report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict (S/2001/852).

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01-64836 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 11.45 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Children and armed conflict

Report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict (S/2001/852)

The President: I should like to inform the Council that I have received letters from the representatives of Belgium, Canada, Egypt, Iraq, Israel, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, Nigeria, the Republic of Korea, Slovenia and South Africa, in which they request to be invited to participate in the discussion of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite those representatives to participate in the discussion without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. De Ruyt (Belgium), Mr. Heinbecker (Canada), Mr. Aboul Gheit (Egypt), Mr. Aldouri (Iraq), Mr. Lancry (Israel), Mr. Motomura (Japan), Mr. Hasmy (Malaysia), Mr. Navarrete (Mexico), Mr. Adekanye (Nigeria), Mr. Lee Ho-jin (Republic of Korea), Mr. Petrič (Slovenia) and Ms. Ndhlovu (South Africa) took the seats reserved for them at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President: In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, and in the absence of objection, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Olara Otunnu, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

I invite the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict to take a seat at the Council table.

In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, and in the absence of objection, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mrs. Carol Bellamy, Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

There being no objection, it is so decided.

I invite the Executive Director of UNICEF to take a seat at the Council table.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Security Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2001/852, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict.

I shall now give the floor to the Secretary-General.

The Secretary-General: It gives me great pleasure to join the Council today. As members know, we had hoped to hold this debate in September to mark the opening of the General Assembly's special session on children, but the meeting had to be postponed for obvious reasons.

The United Nations has always sought to alleviate the plight of children affected by war. The situation in Afghanistan has only reaffirmed this concern. For that reason, the United Nations Children's Fund and the Office of my Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict are working with Mr. Brahimi to ensure that the protection of children and of civilians in general is a key part of the efforts to restore and rebuild Afghanistan. This generation of Afghan children must become a harbinger of peace.

The draft resolution before the Council today tells each of us what we have to do to protect children in armed conflict. It calls on States to punish conduct that fuels and exacerbates conflict. It draws attention to issues such as the recruitment of children and trafficking in arms and natural resources. It urges donors, lenders and others to use their financial leverage. And it insists that the Council, the United Nations system, the international financial institutions and others use their influence as well.

Field monitoring is also essential, and I shall continue to ensure the deployment of child protection advisers. The Council also needs timely, accurate information about implementation of its resolutions,

and I am committed to providing those reports. I also stand ready to bring to the Council's attention the identities of parties that are in violation of any of the provisions of the draft resolution.

War, violence and political instability continue to inflict appalling damage on the world of children. I look forward to working with the Council in the struggle to keep their needs uppermost in our minds, and to ensure that the rights of children and their protection is maintained as one of our main agenda items. I hope that we will all agree on that.

The President: I thank the Secretary-General for his statement and for his commitment to protecting the rights of children.

I now give the floor to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Mr. Olara Otunnu.

Mr. Otunnu: As always, it is a great honour to participate in this debate under your presidency, Madam; you are a true advocate of the protection and rights of children.

This is the fourth open debate of the Security Council devoted to the protection, rights and rehabilitation of children affected by conflict. Since 1998 we have seen the progressive integration of these concerns into the peace and security agenda of the United Nations. This has resulted in an impressive body of practice, key elements of which include resolutions 1261 (1999) and 1314 (2000); the progressive inclusion of child protection provisions in peacekeeping mandates; the creation of the role of child protection advisers; the incorporation of child protection issues into peace agendas and peace accords; and the establishment, as a regular feature of reports to the Security Council, of specific sections on child protection.

The Security Council is at the centre of these developments. On behalf of millions of war-affected children, I would like to thank the members of the Council for embracing and promoting their cause. My Office has developed very close collaboration on this agenda item with various United Nations partners, particularly the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the United Nations Children's Fund; I express warm appreciation to Carol Bellamy and Jean-Marie Guéhenno for their strong support and cooperation. I must pay a special tribute to our partners in the non-governmental-organization community; quite simply, the advancement of this agenda depends in large measure on their work — their advocacy and programmes on the ground. I also thank members of the Council for inviting to today's debate a young person who comes from a conflict situation where children have experienced unbelievable horrors of war. I extend to Alhaji Babah Sawaneh of Sierra Leone a very warm welcome.

In spite of the impressive progress which has been registered, especially at the levels of advocacy, public opinion, policies and programmes, I regret to report that the overall situation of children exposed to war remains grave and entirely unacceptable. The full magnitude and details of this situation are set out in the report of the Secretary-General, which is before the Council.

We share a common preoccupation: how to change the situation for children on the ground. In this context, I should like to underscore some measures, drawn from the report of the Secretary-General and the draft resolution before the Council, which I believe are particularly important for changing the situation on the ground.

There is an urgent need for the international community to organize a more systematic and effective way of monitoring and reporting on the conduct of parties to conflict in terms of their treatment of children. Who is brutalizing and targeting children? When and where are they doing so? Which parties to conflict are observing or flouting their obligations and commitments concerning the protection of children? Such monitoring and reporting, conducted on an objective and impartial basis, would then serve as the basis for concerted action, triggering targeted advocacy and mobilization of pressure by all concerned.

We have good news on the Optional Protocol: just last week we attained the required threshold of 10 instruments of ratification. This means that that important treaty will enter into force in February next year. The entry into force of the Optional Protocol will constitute a milestone in our collective endeavours to end child soldiering. But this milestone will remain largely a theoretical achievement unless it becomes a prelude to concrete measures on the ground. We need to take the following actions, among others: ensure the application of the Optional Protocol in theatres of conflict; mobilize adequate resources for programmes

of demobilization and social rehabilitation for children who have already been made to participate in conflict; and, above all, address underlying causes — political, social and economic factors — that create an environment conducive to the alienation, exploitation and radical indoctrination of children and young people, thus facilitating their involvement in conflict.

A particular scandal in warfare today is the pillage of natural resources by parties to conflict and others. This is robbing children of their birthright. Resources that should provide for rehabilitation, education, health care and nutrition for children are instead being plundered by networks of local, neighbourhood and international actors. Who is reaping the benefits of the rich diamond resources of Angola and Sierra Leone, or the diamond, gold, coltan, timber and coffee of the Democratic Republic of the Congo? Certainly not the children of those countries. Moreover, this has become a means of fielding and prolonging conflicts in which children suffer most. For the children of Angola, Sierra Leone, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and other countries, the blessings of natural resources have been turned into a veritable curse. I urge the Security Council to redouble its efforts in this regard.

As indicated by the Secretary-General earlier, the appointment of child protection advisers represents an important innovation for integrating child protection concerns into peacekeeping operations. This practice needs to be strengthened and given wider application. The current situation in Afghanistan and Burundi present immediate opportunities for designing child-conscious mission mandates and for deploying child protection advisers.

We are eager to learn from our collective experience thus far. For this reason, we have formed an informal inter-agency working group to strengthen our ongoing initiatives on incorporating child protection into peacemaking, peacekeeping and peace-building processes. Similarly, following the call made by the Security Council, we have formed an informal working group to strengthen the training of peacekeeping personnel.

The international community is not doing as much as it should to prevent harm to girls in times of war and to ensure their recovery and rehabilitation. Several recent examples underscore the very particular vulnerability of girls in situations of war. I recall that girls in Rwanda suddenly became the heads of some 60,000 households in the aftermath of the genocide; the trafficking of girls from the Balkans into prostitution rings in Western Europe; the abduction of schoolgirls by the Lord's Resistance Army in northern Uganda; the systematic denial of education to girls in Afghanistan; that in January 1999, the Revolutionary United Front abducted more than 4,000 children from Freetown alone, 60 per cent of them girls; and sadly, that there are fighting groups we know whose preferred agents to serve as suicide commandos remain girls. We must do much more to protect and rehabilitate girls exposed to war.

Last year the Security Council took up for the first time the issue of the correlation between war and the spread of HIV/AIDS, especially in the corridors of war. We need to do a good deal more to ensure public education and prevention.

We meet at a time when our collective attention is focused on Afghanistan. Indeed, taking place in Washington at this very moment is a very important meeting, convened by Japan and the United States, on recovery and reconstruction in Afghanistan. Children today make up more than 50 per cent of the total population of that country. Twenty-three years of war in Afghanistan has defined the lives of at least two generations of children and youth, most of whom have grown up amid violence, death, deprivation, lack of education and despair. Key indicators present a sobering picture of the direct and indirect impact of that conflict on Afghan children.

I appeal to the Security Council and the international community in general to ensure that the well-being and rehabilitation of war-affected children become central concerns in any response to the situation in Afghanistan. In order to facilitate this, I urge the Council to support the efforts of the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan to ensure that child protection remains a priority throughout the peacemaking and peace-building processes in Afghanistan, including through the deployment of specialized child protection staff. No peace is likely to be sustainable there unless children and youth are provided with rehabilitation and hope, so that instead of being potential spoilers they become a constructive force in rebuilding their country.

Only by doing what is right for children today can we build a solid foundation for peace and security

tomorrow. However, while properly focusing on the serious situation in Afghanistan, we must not lose sight of the needs of other war-affected children who equally need our attention and support.

The full text of my remarks will be distributed, and therefore I will not read the entire text. However, before concluding, I hope you will forgive me, Madam President, for invoking the voice of Jamaica's favourite son, your special gift to the world, whose powerful voice gave the world the gift of reggae music. Bob Marley's often deeply spiritual renditions of the themes of suffering and redemption seem particularly appropriate for our deliberations today. I hear Bob Marley's voice calling us to action on behalf of children. I hear him saying something like this:

"Hear the children cryin'
We had told them in yesteryears
Don't worry about a thing
'Cause every little thing gonna be all right.

"Hear the children cryin'
From Afghanistan to Angola
Asking for the same thing –
One Love.

"Hear the children cryin'
From the Balkans to Burundi
Waiting for the same thing –
Redemption Songs. Redemption Songs.

"Won't you help to sing
These songs of redemption
Rendering hope and protection.

"I hear three little birds
Perched on the doorsteps of the Council
Singin' melodies pure and true
Sayin' again and again
'This is our message to you-ou-ou.'"

The President: I now call on the Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund, Ms. Carol Bellamy.

Ms. Bellamy: The draft resolution before the Council today represents another step forward in making the world a safer place for every child.

As all of us are only too well aware, and as the Secretary-General noted, today's debate on children and armed conflict was to have been convened almost exactly two months ago, in the midst of the General Assembly special session on children. The world is a very different place because of what occurred on 11 September, but, as the Secretary-General has observed, we can take heart in the international community's strong reaffirmation of collective action in defence of that most basic of human rights — the right of all people to live in peace and security.

Today's draft resolution builds upon the two previous measures on the issue — resolution 1261 (1999) and resolution 1314 (2000) — as well as the Council's earlier resolutions on protection of civilians; on women, peace and security; and on the threat of HIV/AIDS. These measures are a testament to what the United Nations does best — changing attitudes through incremental development, establishing standards for what is right and just, and making their implementation obligatory.

The issue of child soldiers is a prime example. As recently as five or six years ago, understanding and awareness of the issue were limited. Recruitment of children was usually carried out with little or no notice and often with complete impunity. Since then, the world has received the important contribution of our good friend Graca Michel. I understand the Council has received her latest publication, which I commend to members for reading. The world also now has in force an international legal standard, as Olara mentioned — the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child — which raises the age of recruitment and prohibits the involvement of children under the age of 18 in hostilities.

The recruitment of children is defined as a war crime in the Rome Statute for the establishment of an International Criminal Court. Under the terms of the draft resolution before the Council, those who recruit or use children in violation of international obligations will be brought to the attention of the Council by the Secretary-General, who would be called upon to prepare reports as necessary.

This is a crucial step in the campaign to end the recruitment of children for armed combat and their use as soldiers. It is a sign of serious and continuing commitment, and it certainly is our hope that all members of the Security Council will continue to demonstrate that commitment by urging all States to sign and ratify the new Optional Protocol.

Let me also commend the members of the Council and especially you, Madam President, for inviting a young person from Sierra Leone to address

us today. Alhaji Sawaneh's presence is a reminder not only of the suffering that children endure in armed conflict, but also of the contribution that they can make by participating in the realization of their own rights.

As the Council is aware, access to children caught up in situations of conflict remains a major problem. Most child fatalities in armed conflict occur not as a direct result of violence, but because children are denied access to such essential services as health care, food security and clean water.

I know that this fact was underlined earlier this year, when many Council members visited the Democratic Republic of the Congo and saw evidence to back up a study that showed that of the approximately 2.5 million civilian deaths above the million deaths that might have been expected to occur in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, one-third were children under the age of five.

Resolution 1314 (2000) called for unhindered access to children affected by armed conflict. Today's measure would reiterate that call with renewed urgency and make explicit reference to internally displaced populations. We thank the Council for endorsing this imperative in its resolution, and we urge you to keep up the pressure in all country-specific undertakings.

Today's draft resolution also calls upon parties to armed conflict to collaborate in days of immunization and other opportunities for the safe and unhindered delivery of basic necessary services. This year, UNICEF, the World Health Organization and its partners have been able to carry out successful national immunization days for polio eradication in countries such as Angola, Somalia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sierra Leone, Sudan and, just last week, Afghanistan.

In so doing, we have been able to show that even conflict need not be an obstacle to fundamental development imperatives where the political will exists. But let us not forget that these are partial steps towards securing full, safe and unhindered access to children in situations of conflict.

In this connection, I want to point out that later today, UNICEF and the Fédération Internationale de Football, joined by the Secretary-General, will launch an initiative to dedicate the 2002 World Cup to children. Part of this effort will be to call upon warring parties around the world to take special measures during the time of the World Cup to ensure humanitarian access to children.

Let me also say how gratifying it is to see the issue of HIV/AIDS addressed so forthrightly in the draft resolution. The call to ensure that all peacekeeping personnel receive appropriate guidance and training is a vital follow-up to resolution 1308 (2000). And the request that the United Nations system integrate HIV/AIDS awareness, prevention, care and support into humanitarian programmes is both appropriate and timely.

Clearly, we have an immense task before us. We know from surveys on the ground in conflict-affected countries that levels of awareness of HIV/AIDS and how to prevent it are quite low. We know, too, that girls and women in conflict situations are extremely vulnerable because of sexual violence perpetrated by armed forces and rebel groups, camp police and displaced men and boys. Research has shown that, in conflict areas, men and boys often talk about violence against girls and women as normal and acceptable behaviour.

In line with the draft resolution, UNICEF will continue to seek to protect children from all forms of sexual violence and to include HIV/AIDS education as part of all emergency education programmes, with particular attention devoted to the needs of demobilized child soldiers.

In Afghanistan, the international community is confronting a crisis in which the survival of millions of children and women hinges on an immediate and coordinated response. Our folks on the ground recently estimated that without an adequate humanitarian response, over 100,000 children could die during the winter — which is why we are urgently seeking short-term assistance in the form of continued funding, access to those in need and security for humanitarian staff.

But much more is needed if we are to ensure the long-term well-being of the children of Afghanistan and the sustainable protection of their rights. A major priority for us will be education, making certain that girls, as well as boys, have access to schooling as soon as possible.

In post-war situations — and even during the worst times of conflict — education provides an environment of relative stability and normalcy for

children. It offers an alternative to recruitment. And in affording them opportunities to learn, education gives children a chance to gain basic skills that will allow them to work, to contribute to society and, in time, to support their own families.

Other key priorities are child protection in all areas of recovery, with an emphasis on landmine awareness — Afghanistan is probably the most heavily mined country in the world — and the full participation of women in peace-building efforts.

The Council's draft resolution pledges to put children at the centre of recovery and rehabilitation efforts, and whether in Afghanistan, Sierra Leone or the Great Lakes region, I can assure you that we and our partners, both within and outside the United Nations system, will do everything to make that a reality.

The work of UNICEF is inspired by a vision of a world where leaders use their power and influence to assure that every child grows to adulthood in health, peace and dignity. It is a goal set out in the draft outcome document for the Special Session on Children, which will likely convene in May 2002 — a document in which you, Madam President, have played a crucial guiding role in your capacity as Chair of the Preparatory Committee, and for which I want to take this opportunity to extend on behalf of UNICEF our heartfelt thanks.

The central message of the draft outcome document from the Special Session is a challenge to all of us to assert leadership for children in every sphere of life. I believe that, in the resolution before you today, the Security Council has again risen to that challenge and, in so doing, affirmed that together we can truly change the world with children.

In conclusion, it is my pleasure to introduce the next speaker, Alhaji Sawaneh of Sierra Leone. He is 14 years old. He became a child soldier after being abducted. He spent two and a half years with the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), where he commanded one of several child combat units. He was later cared for by the group of Caritas Makeni. He has a very special and important perspective on the issue of children and armed conflict, including — as I pointed out before — not only the problem but the enormous and largely untapped contribution that young people themselves can make.

The President: Let me, on behalf of the members of the Council, extend a warm welcome to Alhaji Babah Sawaneh, to whom I give the floor.

Mr. Sawaneh: My name is Alhaji Babah Sawaneh. I am 14 years old, and I come from Sierra Leone.

In 1997, when I was 10 years old, I went for my Christmas holiday to my uncle's house in my village, Madina Loko, in northern Sierra Leone. During the second week of my stay, we heard that the rebels were 10 miles away from us. We ran into the bush to hide. At night, we came out quietly and cooked whatever we had in an old farm hut. On the second night, my elder brother and I went to look for water to do the cooking when we ran into the rebels. They searched our pockets for money and, because nothing was found, we were beaten up. We were taken back to our village where we were tied up, beaten again and kept in the hot, burning sun. Many houses were burnt down, properties destroyed and people killed. A group of rebels who had gone into the bush in search of food caught my uncle and the rest of the family. My uncle was later killed.

That same night, we were ordered by the rebels to go with them to their base behind Kabala town. It was over 100 miles from the village. We walked for about 10 days in the bush, resting only a few hours in between, most times on empty stomachs. On arrival, we were trained for a week to shoot and dismantle AK-47 guns. Thereafter, I was used to fight when we attacked. During these attacks, we killed people, burnt down houses, destroyed properties and cut off limbs. But more often I went on food raids and did domestic work for my commander's wife. This is because I was so skinny.

In January 2000, two years after my capture, United Nations peacekeepers met with our commander to explain the process of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR). We were told that the discussion included the release of all child soldiers. Our commander returned to our base the next morning and ordered the other commanders to release us. He said that those who failed to do so would be killed. The information was passed on to all the fighters, and within two days over 250 children were released to the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) in the town of Kabala. We were taken to a care centre in Lunsar.

In Lunsar I was first registered for demobilization and then, later, handed over to Caritas Makeni for care and protection. I immediately reported to the health centre for treatment because I was completely covered in scabies. I had not seen any family member for about two years, so when Caritas told us they would assist us in finding our families I was very happy to give the information requested. Unfortunately, it was not safe for them to get to my village, so I was put into a community secondary school. In May that year, the leader of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) was detained again after a demonstration in Freetown. The rebels decided to attack again, and they attempted to recruit us again. We did not want to fight any more, so we ran away into the bush with our social workers. Over 200 of us were able to get to Freetown, where we were picked up by Caritas.

In Lungi we met other children in the Caritas programme who, also out of fear of being re-recruited, had escaped from centres in Port Loko and Makeni. There were over 350 children in that new centre. At first, the Lungi people did not want us in their town, and that was demonstrated by their highest-ranking chief. The United Nations Children's Fund and Caritas Makeni had a meeting with him and the other local leaders. They explained that we had been demobilized and did not want to fight any more. This changed their minds, and we were allowed to stay. I was again put in a community school, together with other children.

The meeting with the people did not end with the local leaders because the community school children were not friendly to us. They kept calling us rebel children. Thank God we attended the afternoon school, and therefore were able to avoid them for the most part. Caritas then had several meetings with various people of the community to get them to forgive and accept us. This worked very well because, at the end of the year, a woman from the community agreed to provide me with foster care. I am still living with her because my family has not yet been found.

It is important for the Council to know that the journey I have made so far has been less difficult because I entered the DDR programme. I did bad things in the bush, and I saw very bad things done to both children and adults. Taking my gun from me was a vital step for me. The programme helped me feel natural and normal again. It helped me develop ways to fit into society again.

As I have said, the road has not been easy. In school I suffered resentment from other schoolchildren. They looked at me differently, like an evil person. Maybe they had good reasons. After all, we used to do very horrible things to them, their families, friends and communities. But we suffered just like them because we were forced to do those things by our commanders. We have to ask for forgiveness and demonstrate extremely good ways of living.

I have faced a lot of distrust from family members. Some doubt whether I will ever be a normal child again. I am easily reminded of my past when I make mistakes. "Do not bring your rebel life here", they say. People in the community can be really dangerous. Some want revenge at all costs, and in whatever form. With the support of families, friends and agencies working for children, we are overcoming this.

The DDR programme is coming to an end, and I am very happy that thousands of children have been given the chance to go through the process. I know there are more children held back, especially our sisters. I ask this body, on behalf of all the children of Sierra Leone, to do all it can to bring our sad story to an end. We want to be able to move about freely in all parts of the country to attend the schools of our choice. We want to be able to visit our friends and families everywhere in the country without fear of abduction, recruitment and other dangers. Above all, we want our parents to be able to work and to educate us so that we can become useful citizens. This is what peace means for me in Sierra Leone.

I thank the Security Council for inviting me to tell my story on behalf of my brothers and sisters in Sierra Leone and in other countries at war. I hope that the United Nations and Governments in all countries will listen to children and take our words into account. We want a better life. We want peace. We are counting on continued support for this.

The President: Let me thank Alhaji Babah Sawaneh for putting a human face — his face — and the faces of millions of children on the issue before the Council this morning, the situation of children in armed conflict. Let me also thank him for coming to New York to speak to the members of the Council.

Sir Jeremy Greenstock (United Kingdom): I think all of us will feel that what has already been said in the Council this morning is all we really need to

hear. The statements by the Secretary-General, Mr. Olara Otunnu, Ms. Carol Bellamy and, in particular, Alhaji Babah Sawaneh have brought home to us that the work of the Council is there to affect real people on the ground in real ways. I am sorry that our intervention, and the interventions of my colleagues, will have to deal with the bureaucracy of what the Council does. But we have been asked some questions in this morning's statements, and I think that we have to try to point the way to some answers.

The Secretary-General's report, which he has addressed both to the Security Council and to the General Assembly, is a very relevant document in this respect, and I thank him for it. The Special Representative and the Executive Director have also pointed very sharply to ways in which the Council, as one of the organs of the United Nations concerned with children in armed conflict, has to act. Later on, Belgium will make a statement on behalf of the European Union that will also express some fundamental points. But there are some things that I would like to bring out.

The whole subject is of legitimate interest to the Council, because how the international community deals with this issue of children and armed conflict has a direct consequence, not only for the welfare of children in itself, but because failure to recognize the subject and tackle its effects will have a damaging impact on the international peace and security efforts of the Council. This is not simply an issue of morality; it is an issue of security. That is the point.

The report and our draft resolution outline very well the importance of designing a robust normative framework within which the practical work of the wider United Nations system can have an impact on the ground. The Geneva Conventions, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Optional Protocol on child soldiering, the Statute of the International Criminal Court and the International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention on the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour are all vital policy tools in that respect, and, of course, command the full support of the United Kingdom.

But it is particularly important to make those conventions bite. I welcome the Secretary-General's and the Special Representative's intention to name and shame those who contravene those norms and to take follow-up action.

When considering the report within the Council as well as the draft resolution we are to adopt, we should be aware of the need to understand the linkages between this subject and other relevant concerns in the area of those most affected by conflicts. This is important to ensure that we are developing the comprehensive approach to conflict prevention and peace-building that the Secretary-General exhorted us to consider in his report of June 2001 and which is enshrined in our resolution on the prevention of armed conflict, adopted this August.

The thinking outlined in resolution 1325 (2000), on women, peace and security, in last month's presidential statement on the same subject and in our work on civilians affected by armed conflict, to be discussed tomorrow, are all relevant here.

We welcome the progress that has been made in establishing child protection units in the context of peacekeeping missions. We are encouraged by progress in this respect in the work of the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) and of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC), and the role that child protection officers play in the implementation of their mandates.

In resolution 1355 (2001), on MONUC, the Council called for all relevant parties to ensure that child-protection concerns were addressed. We encourage the efforts of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and of the Special Representative to continue to work to strengthen the role of these units in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, especially in the design of effective reintegration components of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programmes for child soldiers and other children most affected by conflicts. I think that Babah Sawaneh has brought that home to us in his statement this morning.

The United Kingdom will continue to support the system's efforts to extend the role of child protection advisers both at Headquarters and in the field. We hope that their work can also be linked, where appropriate, to the need for the important work of mainstreaming gender in the context of peace-building strategies, especially in situations of rehabilitation and reconstruction following the end of hostilities. Olara Otunnu and Carol Bellamy have pointed this out this morning, in particular in the context of the vulnerability of girls in armed conflict.

The United Kingdom takes note of the emphasis placed in the report and in the draft resolution on the inimical effects of illegal trade in natural resources and in small arms by parties to armed conflict and the direct negative link to the interests and well-being of children. We welcome the report's and the draft resolution's emphasis on these areas, as well as the direct link they draw to our work on HIV/AIDS, which is recognized in our draft resolution.

Let me say a final word on the cohesion of the system. Not least because resources are scarce, we would like to underline the need for the various parts of the United Nations system working on conflict issues to do so in a complementary fashion. It is a familiar theme, and perhaps we are now getting somewhere. The integrated mission task force philosophy has to spread out from New York to the ground and, of course, back to the intergovernmental system. There is a real chance to get this right again in the context of Afghanistan.

The United Kingdom is a strong supporter of the Office of the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, and we are working with UNICEF to help build the capacity of its Emergency Operations department to integrate children and conflict issues into their programmes more effectively.

We look forward to seeing these two Offices working increasingly closely together to continue to share information and approaches with each other, with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and other members of the United Nations system, and with non-United Nations partners in the development of effective, durable responses.

We share the Secretary-General's disappointment at the fact that the special session on children had to be postponed from this September. But our debate today, and the draft resolution we are going to adopt, can help inspire a really effective preparatory process — begun under your excellent coordinating role, Madam President — for the special session next year. Perhaps by then we shall feel that we have begun to make our "redemption songs" a reality.

Mr. Cunningham (United States of America): Madam President, I wish to thank you for convening this meeting today, and especially for your continued leadership on this issue. I also want to thank the Secretary-General; his Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, Olara Otunnu; and the Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), Carol Bellamy, for their statements this morning. They were illuminating and help us, I think, put this issue in perspective. It is important that the United Nations, the Security Council and our Governments as Member States keep the issue of children and armed conflict in focus, and I agree with Ambassador Greenstock that, for this Council, we also need to look at it as an issue of security and of direct relevance to our work and for the future of our work.

Mr. Otunnu and Ms. Bellamy's statements show that progress is being made and also that Member States are moving forward to help. Five additional nations have ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, the instrument that works most directly to address the problem before us today. With the tenth ratification filed by New Zealand on 12 November, the Optional Protocol will enter into force in 90 days. The United States is a signatory to the Optional Protocol, and President Bush has submitted it to the Senate for ratification. The Secretary-General's report also tells us that there are additional gains on a number of fronts, but that, unfortunately, there is still very much to be done. This issue will be with us for some time.

We meet today at a time when a new conflict dominates our thoughts and our work. The attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, and the subsequent action in Afghanistan, had not been envisioned when the Security Council considered this issue last year, or even when the Secretary-General released, on 7 September, the report we are discussing today. The war against terrorism has aspects that have not been traditionally considered in the debate on children and armed conflict, such as the thousands of children who lost their parents on 11 September.

However, some aspects of the victimization of children in this conflict are still frighteningly familiar. As First Lady Laura Bush stated in last Saturday's weekly presidential radio address, the plight of women and children in Afghanistan is a matter of deliberate human cruelty, carried out by those who seek to intimidate and control. The State Department report released in conjunction with that statement, entitled "The Taliban's War on Women", tells the story of an Afghan mother with a feverish child badly in need of a doctor. Unfortunately, she had no male family member to accompany her in public, a Taliban rule. Striving to

save her child, she went into the streets anyway, where she was shot by a Taliban guard. Luckily, bystanders were able to intercede to save her and the child.

Mercifully, the Taliban have been pushed out of most parts of Afghanistan, and the international community can now help bring relief to the people of Afghanistan, and especially the women and children. My Government has the honour of hosting today in Washington, together with Japan, a working session to advance that effort and to prepare for a better future.

As we have heard this morning, in addition to children as victims, the problem of child soldiers continues. Children under the age of 15 are still being conscripted or recruited and are being used directly in armed conflict. As the Secretary-General identified again this year, children become at the same time both victims and perpetrators. Our collective action is making this more difficult; we applaud that and are committed to a continuing effort to deal with the problem.

The situation in Sierra Leone, the land of the young man who spoke to us so eloquently this morning, remains daunting. We commend the work that the United Nations Children's Fund and others are doing to address the physical, medical and psychological damage done to the children of Sierra Leone during the brutal civil war. These children are maimed, torn from their families, forced to engage in acts of brutality — helping them is an enormous challenge, and one that we must meet.

We must continue to work together to protect children affected by armed conflict. I have cited but two examples, but there are, all too regrettably, many more. We all have our roles to play, and the United States will continue to do its part to support these children and to make the world a safer place for them.

Mr. Kolby (Norway): Many of today's wars are internal, protracted, fought in developing countries along ethnic, linguistic or religious divides, fuelled by illicit economic activity and fought with small arms and light weapons, and they involve a high proportion of non-State actors. That combination of factors has exposed children to an unfortunately high risk of death, injury and suffering.

The important challenge of protecting civilians, not least children, in armed conflict must take its rightful place as an integral part of all relevant matters dealt with by the Security Council. The reports and recommendations of the Secretary-General and of his Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict are highly relevant and should be given full consideration.

The draft resolution before us imposes a number of requirements on Member States, the United Nations system, financial institutions, regional organizations and, not least, the parties to armed conflict. That will raise expectations. We must now live up to them. To that end, improved cooperation among the whole range of intergovernmental, regional and non-governmental organizations is needed. My delegation is particularly pleased by the fact that, as a means to bridge the gap between short-term and long-term measures, the draft resolution makes direct reference to the international financial and development institutions and their responsibilities in this regard.

It is encouraging that mandates of some peacekeeping operations now include specific provisions for the protection of war-affected children. We also welcome the fact that child protection officers are included in the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone and in the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Because we all know that children are affected by armed conflict wherever it occurs, the most appropriate approach for the future will therefore be to include child protection staff in United Nations peacekeeping operations more as a rule than as an exception.

Small arms, including anti-personnel mines, play a central role in internal conflicts and destroy the lives of millions of people. Commitments made during the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects must be followed up. In order to protect the lives of innocent civilians, including children, we must continue our efforts to establish more efficient control mechanisms that will change today's easy access to those weapons.

War affects boys and girls differently. Girls are often more exposed to rape and other forms of gender-based violence. In wartime, increased numbers of women and girls are forced into prostitution by exploitation, poverty and hunger. Boys are exploited in other ways, most commonly as child soldiers. All these young people run a high risk of contracting HIV/AIDS, a disease that spreads even more rapidly in connection with conflicts and displacement.

Displacement also poses other extreme risks for children. Displaced children have lost the security of their communities and in many cases their families, and are often regarded with resentment and suspicion when they arrive in new communities. Because many of them have experienced traumatizing violations of human rights and humanitarian law, they may be in need of special protection in the country where they seek refuge. We support and encourage United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations in their work to reunite children with their families.

Those responsible for exploiting children during conflict should not enjoy impunity or be considered under amnesty provisions. With the coming into force of the International Criminal Court, the international community will have a good basis for enhancing accountability for crimes against humanity, including the conscription and enlisting of children under the age of 15 years into the armed forces and the use of children in hostilities. We urge those States which have not done so to consider ratifying the Rome Statute of the Court at the earliest possible date. We also urge States to provide financial support for the establishment of the Special Court for Sierra Leone.

The peace-building process hinges on civil society. Civil society's engagement is crucial for strengthening local healing processes and for preventing future violence. We must support the often imaginative endeavours of civil players to rehabilitate and reintegrate war-torn societies. In order to heal the wounds and truly integrate children back into their communities, peace and reconciliation processes must, to the extent possible, also include children.

Finally, my delegation finds that the draft resolution before us has taken an imaginative step by requesting the Secretary-General to attach a list of the names of those parties to armed conflict that recruit or use children in violation of relevant international obligations in situations that are of concern to the Council's agenda. That will hopefully increase accountability and provide more accurate information.

By adopting the draft resolution, the Council would reaffirm its commitment to keeping the question of children in armed conflict high on its agenda. We have the normative framework in place. Our challenge now is to find ways to apply it and to ensure that it is respected. My delegation totally agrees with the Secretary-General that it is now time to initiate an "era of application" (*S/2001/852, para. 5*).

Mr. Shen Guofang (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): The Chinese delegation thanks you, Madam President, for arranging this important meeting on the question of children in armed conflict. We wish also to thank the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, Ambassador Otunnu and Ms. Bellamy for their important statements.

In recent years, the Security Council has made active efforts to press for a solution to the question of children and armed conflict.

Thanks to these efforts, the international community has been paying greater attention to this issue. In his report, the Secretary-General has made some concrete and focused proposals, which merit the attention of the entire United Nations system and all its members. We believe that the most urgent task is for the various parties to abide by the relevant legal norms universally accepted by the international community and to implement the relevant Security Council resolutions in earnest, so as to translate consensus on this issue into action. The Security Council has the primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security. In order to be truly concerned about the protection of children and civilians in armed conflict, priority should be given to taking effective measures to prevent and end armed conflict. Only when conflicts are resolved and crises are addressed in a timely manner can the protection of children be finally fully addressed.

The Security Council has considered the protection of civilians, women and children in armed conflict recently and on many occasions and has passed resolutions and presidential statements. Regrettably, in areas such as Palestine and Afghanistan, where conflicts are quite grave, the protection and the rights of these vulnerable social groups are not ensured, as they should be. According to the statistics of the relevant agencies, about 100,000 Afghan children and adolescents may not survive the coming winter. We are deeply concerned about this. We call upon the international community to increase assistance to the Afghan refugees and to find a political solution to the issue of Afghanistan at an early date.

The protection of children in armed conflict requires the joint efforts of the international community. The Chinese delegation has always

attached great importance to the protection of children. De jure and de facto protection of the rights of the child is a basic principle followed by China in the protection of children. Last year, the Chinese Government signed the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict. We hope that the various parties will abide by the relevant provisions of this Optional Protocol, such as that on recruitment age, at an early date. We hope that the various United Nations agencies will do their jobs well under their respective mandates and that, at the same time, they will strengthen cooperation and coordination so as to bring into full play their combined strengths.

We appreciate the various efforts made by the United Nations Children's Fund, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the Secretary-General's Special Representative, Ambassador Otunnu, for their efforts over a long period. The Chinese Government will continue to support their work, and we are ready to strengthen our cooperation.

Mr. Krokhmal (Ukraine): My delegation welcomes the Secretary-General's important statement.

I would like to thank the Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), Ms. Carol Bellamy, and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Mr. Olara Otunnu, for their continuing efforts to strengthen the role of the United Nations in bringing this issue to the attention of the international community.

The story told this morning by a former child soldier, Alhaji Sawaneh, clearly shows how painful the realities of numerous armed conflicts are in various parts of the world, including Afghanistan. They represent a grave threat to the future of new generations, and my delegation appreciates your leadership, Madam President, in convening the Security Council meeting on this particularly important topic.

By adopting its landmark resolutions 1261 (1999) and 1314 (2000), affirming the protection of children affected by armed conflict as a peace and security concern, the Security Council has become actively engaged in the issue. Those documents became an important basis for advocacy on behalf of children affected by conflict.

Today is the time to analyze the progress achieved in the implementation of our resolutions and to determine ways to move forward in defending children who have suffered in wars. In my delegation's view, the Secretary-General's report to the Security Council is, in fact, a very useful source of reference for this debate. It contains a comprehensive overview of the fate of children caught in conflicts, draws on specific activities from the field, traces the progress made thus far and provides a list of additional key actions that may be taken in the near future. As the report shows, real progress has been made.

The Ukraine welcomes the efforts of the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, Mr. Otunnu, aimed at generating a series of child-protection pledges from the parties to conflict. And we can now see that important commitments made to the Special Representative and other relevant bodies have been met in several zones of conflict.

We especially appreciate the fact that the reports to the Security Council on some specific conflict situations now contain distinct sections on the protection and well-being of children. About 30 reports submitted recently to the Council integrated information and recommendations covering the protection of children affected by armed conflict. On this basis, seven Council resolutions and several presidential statements included concern for the plight of children affected by armed conflict.

We are pleased with the training on the rights of the child, and child protection is now an integral part of the curriculum of all peacekeeping training activities conducted by the Training and Evaluation Service of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations.

We also support the increasing and widespread engagement of non-governmental organizations in advocacy work, as well as the provision of information and programme activities on the ground. My delegation welcomes all those steps taken so far to implement resolutions and encourages all actors to continue these efforts. In spite of the progress achieved so far, a great deal remains to be done to ensure the effective protection and rehabilitation of children in times of war.

We are prepared to move ahead with the new recommendations of the Secretary-General. Many of those recommendations are built on and refine elements of resolutions 1261 (1999) and 1314 (2000).

We share in particular the Secretary-General's view that the mandates of peacekeeping operations should continue to include provisions for the protection of the rights of children.

Peacekeeping missions have a critical role to play in providing protection to children. In order to implement this particular dimension of their mandate, a child protection adviser should be responsible for coordinating activities to ensure the protection and welfare of children. Greater attention should be given to appropriate training of peacekeeping personnel, both civilian and military, in the area of the protection of the rights of children. We are sure that the greater involvement of women in peacekeeping missions will help enhance the capacity of missions in terms of protecting children and dealing with gender-sensitivity aspects.

We totally agree with the Secretary-General that the effective monitoring of adherence to the framework of international law and to consequent obligations is essential action contributing to the protection of children and their rights. In this regard, it is very important to continue to include observations concerning the protection of children in the reports to the Security Council on conflict situations.

Over the past few years, a number of parties to conflict have made concrete commitments to the protection of children. The challenge now is how to ensure adherence to those commitments. Such reporting can assist in exerting political pressure on parties, whose conduct falls short of their child-protection obligations and commitments. The Security Council can make a big difference in this regard by using its collective influence to lean on parties to conflict.

The demobilization and reintegration of soldiers should be an integral part of humanitarian relief and peace-building strategies. In this context, we fully support the Secretary-General's statement that there is an urgent need for the international community, especially for international and regional institutions, to provide sustained and adequate resources to all relevant actors, particularly peace operations, United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) engaged in implementing demobilization and reintegration programmes for children.

In conclusion, Ukraine would like to thank the delegation of France for its leadership in preparing a new draft resolution on children in armed conflict that will assign new initiatives to a number of actors, including Member States, international financial institutions, regional organizations, the United Nations and the Council itself. We support this draft and look forward to further progress in this direction, and we express our readiness to contribute to the subsequent consideration of the question of children in armed conflict, in the Security Council and in the General Assembly.

We also recall another initiative of France, to convene a Security Council summit meeting on children in armed conflict during the General Assembly's special session on children, which will most likely take place in May 2002.

Mr. Ouane (Mali) (*spoke in French*): The problem of children in armed conflict is of increasing concern to the Security Council in the exercise of its primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. This is also a crucial question for the countries of West Africa, which, for more than a decade, have been torn by conflicts in which children have been both the victims and the perpetrators. The touching testimony of Alhaji Babah Sawaneh this morning is revealing in this regard.

Mali, one of the initiators of the World Summit for Children — which led to the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, whose Optional Protocol focuses great attention on the question under consideration — welcomes the holding of today's debate, and we are grateful to you, Madam President, for having taken the initiative on this.

We also extend our thanks to the Secretary-General for his very useful and detailed report and his very important statement this morning.

We must not fail to congratulate and thank Mr. Olara Otunnu, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, for his intelligent and sustained action and, on this occasion, for his, as usual, lucid and detailed briefing.

Of course, I would also like to underscore the important work accomplished by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) for children affected by conflict. I thank Ms. Carol Bellamy, the Executive Director, for her highly useful contribution to our debate this morning.

We have carefully considered the report under consideration, on which I would like at the present time to make a few comments. First, Mali welcomes this second report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict, above all because it contains important measures, whose objective is to ensure the protection of children during and after armed conflict. We also welcome it because it reviews the measures that have been taken to follow up on past recommendations of the Secretary-General and relevant resolutions of the Security Council. Likewise, we are delighted at the forthcoming entry into force of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, of which Mali is completing the formalities of ratification. Along the same lines, we support the recommendations of the Secretary-General contained in paragraph 22 of his report, which are aimed at ensuring respect for the obligations and commitments undertaken for the protection of children in armed conflict.

Secondly, I would like to emphasize the increasingly active role of the Security Council on the question of children and armed conflict. My delegation is delighted in this respect with the efforts of the Secretary-General to make available to the Security Council first-hand information on children affected by conflicts, especially in specific countries. I have in mind in particular Sierra Leone, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Angola and Afghanistan. In this regard, my delegation is pleased at Mr. Otunnu's visit to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, followed by his briefing to the Security Council and its adoption of a resolution calling for greater attention to be given to the protection of children in that country and to strengthening the child-protection component of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC).

My third comment relates to the need to adopt a regional approach to ensure the protection of children in armed conflict. In fact, it is essential to take measures to put an end to the transboundary activities that are harmful to children in times of armed conflict, such as the transboundary recruitment and kidnapping of children, the sale of or trafficking in children, attacks on refugee or displaced-persons camps and installations, the contraband in precious minerals, the illicit traffic in small arms and other criminal activities.

In this regard, Mali took an active part in the adoption, in April 2000, of the Accra Declaration and Plan of Action on War-Affected Children in West Africa. Likewise, Mali made a useful contribution to the training of officers of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) for the protection of children in armed conflict, to the meeting in Libreville in February 2001 on the economic exploitation of children and to the Arab-African forum in Rabat, from 24-26 October 2001, on the sexual exploitation of children. Along the same lines, we must welcome the holding in Cairo, in May 2001, under the auspices of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), of the Pan African Forum on the Future of Children in Africa, at which a Declaration and Plan of Action were adopted that envisage suitable measures for the protection of children affected by armed conflict. It is also reassuring to welcome the adoption by the members of ECOWAS, in April 2001, of an agreement to establish a Child-Protection Unit, which will ensure the integration of child-protection mechanisms into all relevant ECOWAS institutions and also the implementation of the Accra Declaration and Plan of Action.

These various initiatives are accomplishments that must be consolidated, inter alia, through sufficient financial aid from the United Nations and the donor community to regional organizations, such as ECOWAS, that have shown their determination to ensure the protection of children during and after armed conflict but that do not have the means to do so.

Concluding as I began, I would like to reiterate Mali's steadfast commitment to children, especially those that are affected by armed conflict. It is our hope that the special session of the General Assembly on children, to be held in May 2002, will give Member States, the United Nations agencies, non-governmental organizations and civil society a useful opportunity to follow the example of the Security Council, through its resolution 1314 (2000) and the resolution to be adopted at this meeting, by taking decisive measures to ensure the protection of children.

Mr. Gatilov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The rights of the child have become among the most important areas of human rights throughout the United Nations system. We recently marked the tenth anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, a document that was the first-ever universal bill on the rights of the child and provides legal protection of children's rights. The strength of the Convention lies in its recognition of the need to ensure

special protection and assistance to children. Unfortunately, those lofty principles are not always full applied in practice. The suffering of children from hunger, sickness and violence is not a thing of the past, but the bitter reality of today.

Adults start wars, but it is mainly children who suffer in them. Today, we heard first-hand one of the hundreds, perhaps thousands, such stories of suffering. The nature of conflict has changed and over 90 per cent of victims are now civilians, at least half of whom are children. Children constitute over 65 per cent of refugees and internally displaced persons. Behind these dry statistics lies enormous human sorrow, borne on the still frail shoulders of children. They lose parents, their homes are destroyed, their families are shattered, they live in destitution, they are unable to pursue an education and they suffer long-term psychological trauma.

Obviously, the international community must take steps when serious situations develop that cause children to suffer. The best way to protect children, however, is to prevent conflicts from erupting or to settle them before they become so destructive. The role of the United Nations and its Security Council can hardly be overstated in that regard.

We are pleased that our Council, the organ bearing primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, is focusing on the child dimension of armed conflicts. Moreover, Russia believes that the undertaking of humanitarian tasks in the context of protecting children is primarily the prerogative of the specialized agencies and humanitarian organizations, including the World Health Organization, the United Nations Children's Fund, the World Food Programme, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the International Committee of the Red Cross and other bodies with their own mandates that are autonomous at the operational and financial levels.

An important achievement in protecting the interests of children was the General Assembly's adoption on 25 May 2000 of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict. That document is intended to offer real help to children in war, but we need not stop at that. The Russian Federation calls on all States to raise the army recruitment age to 18 years. This issue was thoroughly discussed at the International Conference on War-Affected Children, held last September in Winnipeg, in which the Russian delegation participated. We believe that the exchange of views there was extremely useful and should be pursued.

We are deeply convinced that the problems of children are not confined to armed conflict alone. The protection of children should be approached from a somewhat broader angle. Neglect, childhood drug abuse, the traffic in children and even in their organs and tissues, the sexual exploitation of children — this is far from being a complete list of the bitter problems that threaten children in the world today and thus the future of the entire human race.

An altogether different issue is the problem of terrorism, which is becoming increasingly conspicuous and spares neither adults not children. It is our common duty effectively to prevent the proliferation of these universal evils.

We greatly appreciate the Secretary-General's report prepared for this meeting of the Security Council. We are pleased that many of its recommendations have been taken into account in the Council's draft resolution and will thereby form the basis of a further intensification of our joint efforts in this very important area.

Children will be the custodians of this new century. By protecting them from war today, we will be taking an important step in building a world without violence or conflict, a world of democracy and prosperity.

The President: There are still a number of speakers on my list for this meeting. In view of the lateness of the hour, I intend, with the concurrence of the members of the Council, to suspend the meeting until 3.15 this afternoon.

The meeting was suspended at 1.20 p.m.

United Nations S/PV.4422 (Resumption 1)

Security Council

Fifty-sixth year

Provisional

4422nd meeting

Tuesday, 20 November 2001, 3.15 p.m.
New York

President:	Miss Durrant	(Jamaica)
Members:	Bangladesh	Mr. Chowdhury
	China	Mr. Shen Guofang
	Colombia	Mr. Valdivieso
	France	Mr. Doutriaux
	Ireland	Mr. Corr
	Mali	Mr. Ouane
	Mauritius	Mr. Jingree
	Norway	Mr. Kolby
	Russian Federation	Mr. Gatilov
	Singapore	Ms. Lee
	Tunisia	Mr. Jerandi
	Ukraine	Mr. Krokhmal
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir Jeremy Greenstock
	United States of America	Mr. Cunningham

Agenda

Children and armed conflict

Report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict (S/2001/852)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-178.

01-64953 (E)

The meeting was resumed at 3.20 p.m.

Mr. Corr (Ireland): I would like to thank you, Madam President, for convening this important meeting here today on children and armed conflict. My delegation would also like both to thank the Secretary-General and to commend Special Representative Otunnu and Executive Director Bellamy for their work in this area and for their statements here today. We would also like to thank Alhaji Babah Sawaneh for the eloquent statement he made this morning about his experiences.

Later in this debate, Belgium, which holds the presidency of the European Union, will be making a statement with which Ireland fully associates itself.

The Secretary-General's report on children and armed conflict presents a compelling case for the integration of child-related perspectives into our work. Overall, my delegation sees our task in the Council as twofold. We need to publicly reiterate the primary obligations of the normative framework, including the Geneva Conventions, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Optional Protocol to the Convention. We also need to reassert the importance of resolutions 1261 (1999) and 1314 (2001) in terms of the agenda of the Council.

The second aspect of our work is to now move decisively towards what the Secretary-General and the Special Representative have called the era of application.

Let me make eight general points concerning Ireland's position. First, we consider it essential for all States to comply strictly with their obligations towards children under international law. As Executive Director Bellamy said in last year's meeting, all those who violate children's rights or who collude in such violations — whether Governments or rebel groups, manufacturers of or dealers in weapons of war, or unscrupulous business people — must be made to feel the power of the Council's word.

Secondly, my delegation considers that the Security Council has a clear responsibility on the issue of the child protection, including in respect of conflict situations and peace processes. So, of course, do others. National Governments, the rest of the United Nations system and the wider international community must also assume their obligations.

Ireland believes that the Council must fully integrate concerns in respect of war-affected children into our work. As a Council, we have to keep the issue of children — the severe impact that armed conflict has on them and the particular difficulties they face in post-conflict resettlement — strongly in mind when we approach the tasks of peacemaking, peacekeeping and peace-building.

Thirdly, Ireland believes that we must move systematically to underpin basic standards of humanitarian behaviour in war by armed forces and non-State forces alike, and confront the question of child soldiers.

Fourthly, my delegation fully endorses the Secretary-General's call for the prosecution of sexual violence against women and children as a war crime. We urge the speedy ratification of the Rome Statute establishing an International Criminal Court, which recognizes sexual violence as war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Fifthly, my delegation strongly supports the Secretary-General's recommendation that the mandates of peace operations explicitly include provisions for monitoring the rights of children and the recommendation that accurate and current information about the protection of child rights in conflict situations — from a variety of sources, including United Nations peace operations, country teams, special rapporteurs and non-governmental organizations — be made available to the Security Council and to Member States. My delegation attaches particular importance to the recommendations on integrating child protection into both United Nations peacemaking and peacekeeping processes, including disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes.

As a sixth point, my delegation attaches great importance to the work of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations with regard to children's rights and protection. We commend the recent proposal made by Under-Secretary-General Guéhenno for the establishment of an informal inter-agency working group on the integration of child-protection concerns into peacemaking and peacekeeping processes.

My delegation also notes with satisfaction the cooperation between the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations in incorporating human

rights monitoring into peacekeeping operations, including through child rights officers in the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone and the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

We believe that there is a strong argument for including child protection officers in appropriate peacekeeping operations to focus on children's issues and to assist in monitoring compliance with commitments entered into in respect of children. Special Representative Otunnu has done excellent work in securing 59 commitments from parties to armed conflict. But the parties must have their actions watched closely. They must be made to understand that such commitments are not in their gift, but reflect the demands of the international community.

As a seventh point of emphasis, my delegation wholeheartedly subscribes to the Secretary-General's assessment that the illicit exploitation of natural resources not only prolongs conflict, but also diverts societies' resources away from educational and social infrastructure. Accordingly, we support the Secretary-General's suggestion that the Council consider targeted measures against parties to armed conflict, including complicit neighbours, whose actions are contributing to the illegal exploitation of natural resources and the fuelling of violent conflict.

Finally, Ireland considers that the corporate sector also has particular responsibilities, and my delegation believes that active consideration should be given to the idea — referred to earlier by the Secretary-General — that multilateral development banks and the international corporate sector could conduct child-impact assessments, where feasible, with regard to particular investments and projects that they may be funding in or near zones of conflict.

On a national level, the issue of children in armed conflict is of particular concern to the Irish Government, and Ireland strongly supports international efforts to strengthen the level of protection available to children affected by armed conflict. We are actively supporting the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and are pleased to be a member of the Group of Friends of the Special Representative. Ireland's support for the United Nations Children's Fund is increasing rapidly and has doubled over the past two years. Our aid programme focuses on basic needs and the more vulnerable sectors of the population, with particular focus on women and children, who tend to be most at risk in conflict situations and in areas where protracted conflict is an ongoing obstacle to longer-term development.

The Secretary-General, in his remarks today, as well as Special Representative Otunnu and Executive Director Bellamy, quite rightly treated the issue of Afghanistan at some length. Ireland has expressed its concern in the Council about the use of very young children on the part of all Afghan sides engaged in the conflict. We will wish to ensure that the future administration of Afghanistan includes a strong human rights and justice component, and that particular attention is paid to the position of children.

The Secretary-General's report brings together cogently and clearly the normative framework of international law as well as child-centred perspectives on a number of key issues, including conflict prevention, protection of civilians in armed conflict, the illicit exploitation of natural resources, HIV/AIDS and the illicit spread of small and light weapons. Today's meeting is a good opportunity to reflect on many common elements in these issues and the need to work now on common and effective responses from the Council. We strongly support the draft resolution which is before us, and also join in thanking France for its work in coordinating it.

Mr. Chowdhury (Bangladesh): Children and armed conflict is an issue in the limelight. Much of the credit for this is owed to the eye-opening report by Graça Machel published five years ago. Also, during the decade that has elapsed since the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the international community has come a long way in addressing the plight of the most helpless victims of conflict. We have identified areas where we — national authorities as well as non-State actors — must take steps. We have raised awareness and strengthened the international legal standards for child protection. We have decided on actions to help children overcome trauma during the war and to assist them during the period of post-conflict peace-building.

We were heartened to see the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict obtain the required number of ratifications during the treaty action event last week. Bangladesh ratified the Protocol

early and is happy that it will come into effect on 12 February 2002. Further progress in consolidating the normative framework is expected during the scheduled special session of the General Assembly next spring.

These achievements did not come easily. Sustained efforts were required. We should like to put on record our appreciation to the United Nations for its system-wide response to the needs of war-affected children. In particular, we would like to express appreciation to Special Representative Olara Otunnu and to Executive Director Carol Bellamy of the United Nations Children's Fund for their efforts, and their statements this morning, in this regard.

Thanks to concerted efforts by many actors, there is "commendable progress on many fronts" (S/2001/852, para. 5), as the Secretary-General reported. We thank him for his remarks this morning, as well as for his useful report and also for his recommendations. We are pleased that this year's Security Council resolution, to be adopted at the end of this meeting, will be approving a number of recommendations proposed in the report. We applaud the role of the delegation of France in contributing to this work.

Still, the progress that has been made is insufficient. For over 300,000 child soldiers around the world, armed conflict is a way of life. These children, exploited particularly by armed insurgent groups, are affected physically and mentally. They commit, often under duress, atrocities of great magnitude. Their experience fills their minds with horrific memories that last a long, long time.

Child soldiers are only the tip of the iceberg. Entire generations growing up in conflict areas are permanently scarred by the brutalities of war. Girl children are particularly vulnerable to violence and sexual exploitation. For these children living under the gun, the future holds very little hope or optimism and few prospects.

And yet the children do not give up their dreams. From conflict situation to conflict situation, we hear of children longing to return to their homes, to rejoin their families, to go to school and learn, to play and share, and to care for each other. Today, we have heard the poignant story of a child from Sierra Leone. There are many more like him. As Graça Machel has said, the impact of armed conflict on children is everyone's responsibility and must be everyone's concern. We must not only hear them but also listen to them. We must take their views into our work. Then and only then can we make a difference.

Bangladesh believes that the Security Council needs to focus on five areas to address the situation of war-affected children.

First, what the Secretary-General has called "an era of application" (*ibid.*) of international child protection standards must be launched. The Council must urge Governments and non-State actors to respect and uphold these standards. The Optional Protocol, the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, International Labour Organization Convention 182 and the Ottawa Convention on landmines are all relevant in the context of such an era.

Secondly, while mandating peacekeeping missions, necessary child protection and monitoring elements must be established. Various peacekeeping operations — in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Sierra Leone, for example, and in Afghanistan to follow — should have child protection elements. There is a need to strengthen existing elements and to keep in mind the necessity of including such elements while mandating future operations. Peacekeeping personnel have to be appropriately trained in international human rights, humanitarian and refugee law.

Thirdly, the Security Council must make it clear that there will be no impunity for perpetrators of atrocities. In order to ensure that, international truth- and justice- seeking efforts have to be buttressed and adequately funded. Justice delayed on account of insufficient funding could very well turn out to be justice denied. The Council should seek to ensure that the truth- and justice-seeking processes pay attention to the full range of children's wartime experiences and aim at long-term interventions to ensure their reintegration into society.

Fourthly, while implementing the post-conflict response, it is important to encourage the United Nations agencies and international financial institutions to devote particular attention to the rehabilitation and reintegration of children and their access to basic services like education, health care and housing. Quick impact projects have proved to be a useful tool. Involving local communities in these efforts is crucial for imparting a sense of ownership and long-term sustainability in respect of these efforts. High priority must be accorded to the special needs, and particularly

to the vulnerabilities, of girls affected by armed conflict, including those who are heading households, orphaned, sexually exploited or used as combatants. Technical and financial assistance has to be provided to countries and regional and subregional organizations engaged in post-conflict peace-building.

Finally, we have to avoid the perpetuation of the cycle of violence. To prevent today's victims from becoming tomorrow's perpetrators, the values of a culture of peace must be inculcated in every child. We are happy that there is agreement in the Security Council on lending support to efforts to promote a culture of peace, including through peace education programmes and other non-violent approaches to conflict prevention and resolution. Robust pursuit of these goals may change the course of history, and will most certainly change the future of the child today and thereby of the man and woman of tomorrow.

Let me repeat my thanks to you, Madam President, for your work, particularly the work that you did in the preparatory process for the special session on children. Consideration of this topic that is so important to us had to be postponed for two months due to the events that took place in September.

I also want to thank the Secretary-General for his report and Mr. Olara Otunnu, Ms. Carol Bellamy and the young Alhaji Babah Sawaneh for their interesting contributions in this debate.

As we stated in the General Assembly, the medium- and long-term vision guiding Colombia's commitment to and in favour of children is based on recognition of the central role of boys and girls in society and of their role as citizens and as the potential builders and subjects of their own development. In my country, we are making great political and financial efforts to remove children from armed conflict, and we work tirelessly in that conviction.

Today, we will be adopting a resolution contemplating a set of Security Council directives on children in armed conflicts. It will recognize the specific responsibilities of a number of relevant actors, including, in particular, the parties to a conflict, States, the Secretary-General, agencies, United Nations funds and programmes, international and regional institutions for finance and development, and regional organizations.

We consider this action as an effort to ensure that the coordination and harmonization of policies between intergovernmental organs of the United Nations produce tangible results on the ground that substantially improve the living conditions of children. The challenge of coordination and harmonization is particularly relevant in those situations under consideration by the Security Council.

If effect, when defining the Council's role in situations such as those of Guinea Bissau, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Angola, it is of fundamental importance that we adequately consider the efforts to help children that other actors in those countries carry out. I want to mention an example. The country notes agreed on by the Governments of those countries and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) are usually approved by the Executive Board without adequately considering the Council's role. Nor does the Council consider the information contained in these notes, despite the fact that they are politically relevant. It is important to put an end to this practice in order to generate processes that allow the intergovernmental organs in New York to complement each other's work, with the goal of maximizing its benefits for children.

The resolution that we will adopt today is the third — counting resolutions 1261 (1999) and 1314 (2000) — to be considered by the Council on the topic of children and armed conflicts. We welcome the degree of attention this topic has received in this organ of the United Nations. However, we would like to invite reflection on the need to avoid in the future emulating the General Assembly in adopting annual resolutions that do not necessarily add value to the consideration of an item. That is a risk for all generic resolutions that do not address a concrete situation on the Security Council's agenda.

We suggest that we start to examine in greater detail the situation of children in specific cases. The situation in Afghanistan offers us a challenge of enormous dimensions, but also a great opportunity. The Security Council, the Secretary-General, the agencies, United Nations funds and programmes, international and regional institutions for finance and development, and regional groups and organizations can demonstrate that they can make a real difference in the lives of the children of Afghanistan.

In relation to Afghanistan, it would perhaps be appropriate to look at the possibility of issuing a decision allowing for the achievement of two goals. On the one hand would be the goal of facilitating the access of humanitarian aid to children, incorporating this question into the work programme of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan, Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi, and creating sustained, funded programmes for the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of children. On the other hand would be the goal of coordinating the Council's response with the activities already undertaken by UNICEF and other agencies of the system operating on the ground.

I will conclude by reiterating to the Council and the international community the importance of the question of small arms in the consideration of the problem of children and armed conflict, as was reflected in the Presidential Statement (S/PRST/2001/21) of 31 August 2001. We affirm once again that arms-producing countries must exercise the highest degree of responsibility since the technological advances that have enabled the production of lighter arms have also enabled armed groups and terrorists to incorporate child combatants in their ranks.

Mr. Jerandi (Tunisia) (*spoke in French*): Madam President, I would first like to thank you for scheduling this meeting of the Council on this crucial issue of great importance today. I would also like to convey my delegation's encouragement to Mr. Otunnu for his commitment to the cause of children. His presentation just now and the report of the Secretary-General lucidly indicate practical recommendations for adopting concrete measures for protecting children during armed conflicts. I will also take this opportunity to thank Ms. Bellamy, the Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and convey to her my delegation's appreciation for her agency's work.

This morning we heard the moving testimony of Alhaji Babah Sawaneh. Yes, he was a child soldier, but we must not forget that it was the war commanders who made him a child soldier against his will. How many children are there in the world who have been robbed of their childhood by wars and conflicts of all types? So many children in Palestine have never had a childhood, have known only insecurity and have witnessed the death of their parents or of other children. The same has happened to children in Liberia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, Burundi and Afghanistan. I also see the children of Iraq, whose childhood — and even life — continues to be severely affected by one of the harshest sanctions regimes. Even here in the United States, what *will* happen to the children who lost their parents on 11 September, having done nothing to deserve to become orphans? All these children and so many others demand our attention. There are so many in the world!

The question of children in armed conflict has become a priority concern for the international community. Children today are either targets of violence or the perpetrators of it; in every instance, they are at the very heart of the conflict. They are among the first to fall victim to the deterioration of humanitarian situations, and they become an essential part of any peace-building operation. The destruction of the social fabric, the increase in infant mortality and the gradual erosion of the family structure because of the displacement of populations create complex problems to which we have to find an answer.

The report of the Secretary-General takes up all of these aspects relating to the situation of children and armed conflict. He has put forward a coherent and ambitious strategy to protect these children. My delegation subscribes to the Secretary-General's recommendations and believes that it is important to start implementing them. We welcome the fact that the question of children in armed conflict has already been given particular attention by the Security Council. Many Security Council documents have referred with disquiet to the fate of these children and have devoted specific provisions in resolutions or in presidential statements to this issue. These provisions have been followed up in the field. This trend should be strengthened in any matter that is brought before the Security Council.

Nevertheless, we believe that protecting children in wartime depends to a large extent on the behaviour of the parties to armed conflicts. It is therefore up to the international community, and more specifically the Security Council, to send a strong and clear signal to all that they must strictly respect obligations and commitments regarding the protection of children. To this end, it is of prime importance to consolidate the legal framework and to encourage States to sign legal instruments relating to the protection of children. Respect for commitments entered into under these instruments, as well as verifying their implementation,

is an essential aspect of what needs to be done in order to better protect these children.

The protection of children affected by armed conflict is a constant concern throughout the process of a peacekeeping operation. The mandates of such operations must contain explicit provisions that will ensure respect for the rights of children. The Security Council resolutions on the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the situation in Sierra Leone were important steps in this respect. The inclusion of concern about the protection of children in the mandates of peacekeeping operations facilitates their demobilization and focuses attention on the seriousness of the issue. Furthermore, this makes it possible to monitor the parties to the conflict to prevent any further recruitment of children.

Protecting children affected by armed conflict during peacekeeping operations further requires appropriate training for military, civil and police personnel involved in operations on the ground. In this connection, the initiative of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations of establishing an informal working group to train peacekeeping personnel in child protection is something that deserves to be fully encouraged.

It is also important that peace agreements take account of protecting child soldiers. This should be an integral part of any negotiation on a settlement of a conflict. The demobilization and reintegration of child soldiers has the advantage of putting an end to the spiral of violence that has taken place in certain parts of the world and makes it possible for children to fully recover their dignity. The support of international and regional organizations and the mobilization of internal resources are necessary to successfully carry out such a programme. In this connection, we believe that the international community should initiate new strategies and targeted programmes for the benefit of girl children whose rehabilitation is even more difficult.

We believe that it is necessary to strengthen cooperation among all the actors in the field, not only among the United Nations agencies but also with non-governmental organizations. We believe that this approach deserves great consideration.

In conclusion, my delegation would like to thank the French delegation for coordinating the work on the draft resolution, to which we subscribe. We believe that this is indeed an ambitious draft that will have a favourable impact on the protection of children affected by armed conflict. It will, in a very timely manner, strengthen the juridical arsenal in this area.

Mr. Doutriaux (France) (*spoke in French*): The European Union will be speaking on our behalf later on. However, I would like to say a few words in our national capacity. First of all, I would like to tell you, Madam President, how pleased we are that this debate is taking place during your term of office. Your commitment to the cause of children is known by each and every one of us, and I am pleased that you have taken the symbolic decision to hold this discussion on 20 November, the anniversary of the adoption by the General Assembly of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The importance that we all attach to this question is confirmed by the presence of the Secretary-General at our meeting this morning, as well as that of his Special Representative, Mr. Otunnu, and the Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), Ms. Bellamy.

I do not wish to dwell on the topical relevance of the question of children in armed conflict. I can only endorse what has been said by most of the previous speakers. The particularly moving testimony this morning of a young child soldier enabled the Council to comprehend the magnitude and seriousness of the problem. In the strongest possible way, it demonstrates the urgency incumbent upon us, the Council — indeed, our moral responsibility — to take up a challenge that, under the Charter, constitutes a threat to peace and security.

When the Council decided in September to respond to the recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's most recent report, we set particularly ambitious goals for ourselves. The Council was to organize a debate at the highest possible level — that of heads of State and Government — to deal with this question. The draft resolution was designed as a true plan of action for all actors and was to be formally adopted by the heads of State and Government. The postponement of the General Assembly's special session changed the format of our debate; however, it has not lessened our determination to produce a document that can meet the challenge, as the Secretary-General said this morning.

The draft resolution that we are about to adopt marks an important stage in protecting children in war. Let me give me a broad outline of the essential

elements. First of all, there are two goals: to build on what has been accomplished, to streamline and to reorganize commitments made by the Council in previous resolutions; and at the same time to sketch out new areas of action by precisely codifying what could be achieved by all actors concerned. This approach underlies the distinctive structure of the draft resolution, which outlines, for the first time, the responsibilities of all — the Council first and foremost, the belligerents themselves, the Member States, United Nations funds, programmes and agencies, international financial institutions, regional development banks, regional organizations and non-State actors such as private enterprise — and presents them in a sort of global road map. Those are the goals.

Now, turning to the subject of ways and means, according to the draft resolution, the Council should have more effective tools, in relation both to monitoring the fulfilment of commitments and obligations by parties to conflicts, and to mobilizing resources for supporting activities to help the child victims. The Council will continue to give high priority to the situation of children when it considers each of the issues before it. It will ensure that enforcement measures that could be adopted under Article 41 of the Charter take into account the particular vulnerability of civilian populations and that of children in particular.

Finally, we ought to emphasize a new mechanism that would also be set up by this Council draft resolution. Paragraph 16 requests the Secretary-General to submit an annual list of parties to armed conflicts that recruit or use children in violation of international obligations applicable to them. That list, submitted to the Council, could be seen as an initial step towards establishing a more effective monitoring and follow-up system for all of the commitments that appear in the text of the draft resolution. The list should also make it possible to measure the progress made on an annual basis. There is no doubt that this could serve to orient the principal donors, Governments and international institutions in the provision of technical and financial assistance and in their contributions to the rehabilitation programmes for children who are victims of conflict.

Year after year, the international community has increasingly mobilized itself to protect children in armed conflict. The publication, in 1996, of the report by Ms. Graça Machel probably marked a significant stage in the raising of consciousness. The response of the Security Council thereafter did not fall behind. In September 1997 it named Mr. Olara Otunnu as the Special Representative of the Secretary-General; the Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda has prosecuted those responsible for rape and sexual violence during times of civil war; special provisions were made for children in the Lomé peace agreements on Sierra Leone; and, finally, the Council adopted numerous resolutions devoted to the protection of children.

It is my hope that the draft resolution to be adopted by the Council today can also be ascribed to our efforts in this direction. I also hope that it will enshrine our determination to end barbaric practices against children and, in the end, against humankind.

Ms. Lee (Singapore): In an essay entitled "Children as Killers", writer Corinne Dufka describes the following scene in Liberia:

> "I came upon a group of five NPFL [National Patriotic Front of Liberia] child soldiers, the eldest, not more than 12, playing soccer on one of the most heavily contested corners of the urban war. I saw their rifles discarded on the street below a rain-soaked Liberian flag, and only then did it become clear that the white ball they maneuvered was a human skull. The decaying body lay some 20 meters away. They kicked the ball over the debris of wall, spent cartridges, old wallets, clothes dropped by fleeing civilians and old photographs, and squealed with delight as it entered the goal post marked by two rusting sardine cans."

Kicking a skull around as a football must be a brutalizing experience. It diminishes our humanity. Yet these children are also trying to behave like normal children playing football. Our challenge here is to ensure that children like these can experience a normal childhood and not be scarred for life. We are therefore pleased that the Security Council is proceeding with this debate despite the postponement of the special session on children.

One year is a long period in the life of a child. The sooner we try to rescue children from armed conflict, the more of their childhood we will give to them. Unfortunately, childhood, once lost, can never be returned or replaced. The statement we heard this morning from Alhaji Babah Sawaneh, delivered with honest and moving eloquence, was nonetheless a brutal and devastating reminder of how tragic the loss of

childhood can be. His statement has also highlighted the importance of post-conflict programmes for children who are scarred by armed conflict.

Even as we speak, Afghan children are suffering from the war that is raging in their country. In an Agence France Presse report of 16 November, last week, it was reported that

> "Some of those affected will never fully recover physically and psychologically. Seth Mohammed, 11 years of age, will go through life without his right leg, which was blown off when a bomb landed close to a group of children playing near the southern city of Kandahar. Twelve days after he was admitted to hospital in shock and caked in dried blood and mud, he is struggling to come to terms with what has happened."

Ms. Bellamy and several other speakers have also highlighted the potential devastating effect of winter to Afghan children.

The problem of children in armed conflict is not new. For millennia, children have been marched off to war as drummer boys, porters, servants and messengers. The ill-fated Children's Crusade of 1212 involved thousands of doomed children. Hoards of French children died of hunger and disease during their march, while thousands of German youngsters froze in the Alps or plummeted down the mountainsides. During the American Civil War the youngest known soldier, Avery Brown, was enlisted in the Union infantry just shy of his ninth birthday, after claiming to be age 12 on his enlistment papers. More recently, an estimated 250,000 children, even as young as age 5, have been reportedly conscripted to serve as soldiers in dozens of armed conflicts around the world, some with armed insurgencies and some in regular armies.

The problem of child soldiers is just one part of the grim canvas of children in armed conflict. The broader picture was first sketched out in the ground-breaking and comprehensive 1996 report entitled "Impact of armed conflict on children", by Ms. Graça Machel. Her report noted that

> "more and more of the world is being sucked into a ... space in which children are slaughtered, raped, and maimed; a space in which children are exploited as soldiers; a space in which children are starved and exposed to extreme brutality. Such unregulated terror and violence speak of deliberate victimization. There are few further depths to which humanity can sink." (*A/51/306, section I.A, para. 3*)

Against that backdrop, we clearly need to inject a greater sense of urgency in our work on this subject. The Secretary-General's excellent report on children and armed conflict of 7 September 2001 spells out comprehensively what we have to do. Both Ms. Carol Bellamy and Mr. Olara Otunnu have also done excellent work in this field, and can provide the Council with clear guidance. Mr. Otunnu deserves special commendation for eliciting 59 specific commitments from Governments and representatives of armed groups in several zones of conflict where children have suffered immensely. It is one thing for the Council to issue declarations, it is more heartening to see their real impact on the ground.

The five-point programme of actions that Mr. Otunnu persuaded all the parties in the Democratic Republic of the Congo to accept is a significant breakthrough. So too is his success in persuading the Government of Rwanda to enact legislation that enables girls, including tens of thousands who became heads of households after the 1994 genocide, to inherit farms and other properties crucial to their survival.

The question for us in the Council is how to build on that good work. One way is to endorse the report, especially the action points. We will do that when we adopt our draft resolution later. But in endorsing a long report, it is sometimes useful to spell out some priorities that deserve immediate attention. We would like to suggest four areas.

First, effective, continuous monitoring is a key feature to successful implementation.

Secondly, those who violate the basic rights of children must pay. Amnesty should be withheld from adults who abduct, recruit or use child soldiers in combat. Those individuals should receive no impunity and no sympathy.

Thirdly, demobilization, rehabilitation and reintegration (DRR) are the only viable long-term solutions for child soldiers. We should also give weight to the reports of the child-protection advisers operating within the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) and the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC), and ensure that similar advisers are sent to

Afghanistan when the United Nations establishes itself there.

Finally, we need to continually refine and improve our approach. The Secretary-General has proposed the launch of an international research network on children and armed conflict. This deserves serious consideration. The network could become an invaluable source of information and recommendations for child-protection issues.

Our work on children and armed conflict cannot be separated from the work we are doing on conflict prevention. One of the operational weaknesses of the Council is that it looks on each issue or theme as belonging to different compartments. But the compartments are not separate; indeed, they are more like cabins on the same boat. All issues touching on armed conflict have to be handled together. We therefore have to remind ourselves of the commitment we made when we endorsed, in resolution 1366 (2001), the Secretary-General's comprehensive report on the prevention of armed conflict of 7 June 2001. That report spelled out 10 principles to enable the United Nations to move from a culture of reaction to a culture of prevention. It is worth recalling in particular the fifth principle, which pointed out that:

> "The primary focus of preventive action should be in addressing the deep-rooted socio-economic, cultural, environmental, institutional, political and other structural causes that often underlie the immediate symptoms of conflicts." *(S/2001/574, para. 169)*

Let me recall also the sixth principle, which outlined the components of an effective preventive strategy, and noted that a strong focus was required on gender equality and the situation of children.

Similarly, the debate we are having here today cannot be divorced from the discussion that the General Assembly had yesterday on the implementation of the Millennium Summit Declaration. This is one reason why we should, when we complete our discussion here, report in full all of the progress made to the special session on children, which will be held in May next year.

But there is another, more important reason to do this. The Security Council, which represents only 15 States, cannot deliver the political commitment of the international community. The special session on children can do this. Without such a commitment, our progress will remain only as words on paper.

Mr. Jingree (Mauritius): My delegation joins previous speakers in thanking the Secretary-General, Special Representative Otunnu and the Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), Ms. Bellamy, for the important statements they made this morning.

We commend the Special Representative for his relentless efforts and commitment in dealing with children affected by armed conflict. We welcome his perseverance in trying to elicit specific commitments from Governments and from representatives of armed groups in several zones of conflict where children have suffered immensely. He deserves our full encouragement in his important endeavour.

This morning we were deeply touched by the extremely revealing testimony of Alhaji Babah Sawaneh, who gave us an unimaginable insight into the despicable conditions of a child soldier's day-to-day life. He is among the few lucky ones; he has been able to demobilize and reintegrate into society. The Council should realize that there are still more than 300,000 of these child soldiers, mostly in Africa, who are still, even as we speak, holding weapons and being forced to fight.

The report of the Secretary-General has clearly shown that existing normative standards can contribute positively to the development of standards of acceptable conduct for parties to armed conflict in respect of children. While we note the efforts made by Member States, the United Nations and regional organizations in protecting and promoting the rights of children in armed conflict, it is clear that a lot more needs to be done to ensure that children are fully protected in conflict situations. This meeting gives us the opportunity to assess the implementation of resolution 1314 (2000) and to come forward with innovative ideas.

Children and women represent one of the most, if not the most, vulnerable segment of society in any conflict situation. All kinds of atrocities are committed against them, especially in time of war. It is indeed regrettable that not enough attention is paid to the plight of this category of the population.

Conflicts and wars are not new events in our world. Two world wars have been fought, yet in the

past children and women were always protected in one way or another. Children were not allowed to become directly involved in the fighting. This may have been due to the fact that children were not physically strong enough or mentally prepared to fight wars.

Today the situation has changed dramatically. Children have, in fact, become one of most exploited groups. There are various reasons for this, one of which is the accessibility of small arms and light weapons, which are extremely easy to manipulate.

While we welcome the important commitments made by some countries in addressing the scourge of the recruitment of child soldiers, we note with concern that the Secretary-General continues to receive credible reports of the recruitment of child soldiers by parties to some of the ongoing conflicts.

The statistics are alarming. The primary responsibility of protecting children in armed conflict undeniably falls upon States. Greater efforts are required by countries in conflict to provide protection to children, so that they are not subjected to any kind of atrocity and do not become easy prey for the belligerents.

It is equally important that all parties respect fully the norms of international law for the protection of children in armed conflict. We strongly condemn the recruitment of child soldiers and consider such acts to be crimes against humanity, for which those responsible should be brought to justice.

We note with satisfaction that the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict will soon enter into force. We call on all Member States to ratify the Protocol as early as possible.

My delegation believes that once dialogue starts with parties to armed conflicts, one of the first questions that needs to be tackled should concern the plight of children and the elaboration of specific programmes which would help monitor their protection and eventual rehabilitation. The Secretary-General should ensure that his envoys, peace emissaries and special representatives take all aspects of the question of children and armed conflict into consideration while negotiating peace agreements and implementing their mandates.

We welcome the decision of the Secretary-General to ensure that all reports to the Council contain specific information on the situation of children in the country concerned.

Efforts to demobilize child soldiers in the midst of conflicts and their rehabilitation and reintegration into society are complex tasks, but they are crucial for the prevention of re-recruitment or re-enlistment. It is important that individual centres be given adequate and sustained resources for long-term reintegration. In this respect, we commend such agencies as UNICEF and its partners that are involved in the rehabilitation of children, particularly with respect to the counselling and non-formal education that they are providing to former child soldiers.

The Secretary-General had identified the lack of basic information, one of the key characteristics of the situation of children to be demobilized, as one of the challenges for the agencies and donors attempting to plan an appropriate child-soldier demobilization and reintegration programme. We appeal to the international community to extend its full cooperation in the rehabilitation and reintegration process in order to break the cycle of violence for children.

The linkages that exist between HIV, conflict and children must also be addressed seriously. It is inadmissible that children are the victims of sexual violence perpetrated not only by the rebel forces, but also by militias supported by government forces. These inhuman acts widen the spread of HIV and put the future of coming generations at risk. The rape of women and children as young as 12 years of age is often used, by both security and rebel forces, as a weapon of terror among the civilian population. If urgent steps are not taken to address this problem today, the burden on countries emerging from conflict will be even greater tomorrow.

In this respect, we fully concur with the recommendation of the Secretary-General that sexual violence against women and children should continue to be prosecuted as a war crime.

The use of children by organized drug traffickers and by those engaged in the illegal exploitation of the natural resources of countries is reported to have gained prominence. The forcible dragging of children into the drug-trafficking business and into involvement in the illegal exploitation of natural resources must be seriously addressed, and ways must be found to put an end to such practices.

The rate at which children are being involved, in one way or another, in armed conflict by organized gangs is deplorable. The fact that a network is being used to trade children to conflicts across borders makes imperative cooperation at the regional and subregional levels. We believe that regional and subregional organizations, as well as Interpol, could play an important role in tracking down this network. We therefore appeal for greater cooperation by all of the actors concerned in dismantling such networks.

Children are the custodians of the future and of our world heritage. It is important that they be taught the notions of peace, tolerance and respect for one another. They should not be used to fight, nor should they have forced upon them a culture of hatred, violence and fighting as their only means of survival.

As members of the Security Council, we have an important responsibility towards children and towards ensuring a peaceful future for them.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Jamaica.

Earlier today, we heard a cry from the heart of a child: a cry on behalf of millions of children around the globe affected by armed conflict; a cry for a better life; a cry for peace. Alhaji Babah Sawaneh's vision must guide the Security Council as it seeks to fulfil its primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. Alhaji Babah Sawaneh has put a face on the report of the Secretary-General so ably presented to us today by his Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict; on the work of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), graphically described by its Executive Director; and on the provisions of the resolutions that the Security Council has adopted on specific conflict situations.

Today's debate, which is being held on Universal Children's Day, which we observe as a day of worldwide fraternity and understanding among children, and of activity promoting the welfare of the world's children, also reminds us of the important role that States Members of the United Nations, individually and collectively, must play if we are to reduce the gap between norms and practice.

It is true that over the past five years greater attention has been focused on the plight of children affected by armed conflict. That has stimulated a number of innovative and practical initiatives, strengthened the advocacy work of UNICEF and of the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, and enhanced the ability of the United Nations to implement programmes at the international level and in affected countries and regions. As a result, the issue has now been placed squarely on the international peace and security agenda.

Nevertheless, despite the commitments made and the actions taken, children are still being killed, maimed, used as combatants, uprooted from home and community and forced to live in conditions of extreme deprivation. There is no doubt that armed conflict exacerbates poverty, reduces progress in human development and increases children's vulnerability to sexual abuse and physical exploitation. The challenge before us is how to change that tragic reality.

The report of the Secretary-General (S/2001/852) presents us with a balance sheet on the implementation of existing Security Council resolutions and identifies areas where further action is still required. We must commend the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the initiatives which have been implemented since last year's report. I wish to highlight some issues which my delegation believes must be taken account of in the pre-conflict and post-conflict phases, and during conflicts, to address the plight of children in a comprehensive and integrated manner.

First, attention must be given to the prevention of armed conflict, as the best way to reduce the harm done to children is to prevent armed conflicts from breaking out.

Second, addressing the root causes of conflict must therefore be a matter of priority for the international community.

Third, the international community must also encourage respect for human rights and encourage specially designed post-conflict peace-building and rehabilitation programmes that can reduce the likelihood of the re-emergence of armed conflict. In that regard, disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation programmes must receive adequate funding.

Fourth, the promotion of a culture of adherence to humanitarian norms and standards is of critical importance, especially in the light of increased

violations of humanitarian law in conflict situations. A component of any effective strategy must be an end to impunity through the prosecution of those who deliberately violate the rights of children. Genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity and other egregious crimes perpetrated against children must be excluded from amnesty provisions contemplated during peace negotiations. By the same token, child ex-combatants should be regarded primarily as victims rather than as perpetrators, and should be exposed to rehabilitative treatment.

Fifth, appropriate monitoring and reporting mechanisms must be established to ensure the compliance of armed groups and non-State actors.

Sixth, better and more effective cooperation and coordination with regional and subregional bodies must be developed. In that context, we wish to express appreciation for the work of the non-governmental organizations in the field.

Seventh, the impact on children of the illicit trade in small arms and the illegal exploitation of and trade in natural resources must be forcefully addressed.

Eighth, we must replicate successful initiatives to protect children affected by war at the community level, make education an essential component of humanitarian assistance, and include information on the security of children in all reports prepared for the Security Council on conflict situations. In that regard, I wish to highlight that we would wish to see these and all other so-called generic resolutions mainstreamed.

Among the recommendations made in the Secretary-General's report, I wish to highlight the launch of an international research network on children and armed conflict as being most timely, because appropriate responses can only be based on accurate data. We also express appreciation to the Department of Peacekeeping Operations for the initiatives taken on the training of peacekeepers.

This year's report of the Secretary-General is the culmination of nearly a decade of work that began with the seminal work of Ms. Graça Machel, to whom the international community owes a debt of gratitude. The provisions of the draft resolution to be adopted at the end of this debate are addressed, inter alia, to parties to armed conflict, Member States, the Secretary-General and regional and subregional organizations. The draft resolution also requests the Secretary-General, in his next report, to list parties to armed conflict that recruit or use children in violation of international obligations applicable to them. It is important that this draft resolution be used as a guide for reporting on conflict situations.

In conclusion, let me first of all express my delegation's appreciation to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, to the Executive Director of UNICEF and to their staffs for keeping the focus of the international community on the children who are victims of armed conflict: children whose lives are put in jeopardy by actions beyond their control. We also wish to express our appreciation to the delegation of France for having so ably coordinated work on the draft resolution before us. Our future actions will determine whether we have heard the cry from the heart of Alhaji Babah Sawaneh for peace and for a better life.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

The next speaker is the representative of Belgium. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. De Ruyt (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The countries of Central and Eastern Europe associated with the European Union — Bulgaria, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, the Czech Republic, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia — the associated countries Cyprus, Malta and Turkey, and the European Free Trade Association country belonging to the European Economic Area Liechtenstein align themselves with this statement.

I want to begin by thanking Ms. Carol Bellamy, Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and Mr. Olara Otunnu, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, for their important statements this morning. We wish also to thank Alhaji Babah Sawaneh for having, on behalf of the tens of thousands of children who continue to experience the same tragic tale, given the Council an account of a state of affairs that we are firmly determined to combat.

We should like to thank the Secretary-General for his very detailed and thorough report, the recommendations of which should enable us to tackle the problem of children and armed conflict head-on.

The Secretary-General's report is also a reminder to us of the tragic situation of children in armed conflict and of the long way still to go to protect them from conflict and its devastating consequences, direct and indirect. Reading the report, we are struck by the number and the variety of ways in which children are involved in armed conflict: millions of children are the first innocent victims of conflicts that destroy their future and, at the same time, the future of their countries.

The Secretary-General's recommendations are rightly addressed to a number of actors. It is indeed the international community as a whole that bears responsibility for their implementation. In this connection, we welcome the commitment shown by the Secretary-General and his Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, Mr. Olara Otunnu. We reiterate our support for their work and for that of the United Nations Children's Fund, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. Finally, we wish to stress that in addition to these efforts, it is the Member States that individually bear the responsibility for implementing the agreed standards in this matter.

We are pleased that the Security Council is seized of this matter, for that signals unequivocal recognition that the protection to which children are entitled, particularly under the Convention on the Rights of the Child, is an essential factor in building peace and lasting security. The European Union calls on the Member States to implement Security Council resolutions 1314 (2000) and 1261 (1999), on children and armed conflict, and welcomes the adoption of a new draft resolution by the Council. This draft resolution, whose scope of action is greater than that of its predecessors, in which the means envisaged are also more ambitious, confirms the strong commitment of the international community to this matter.

Since this complex issue is to be discussed in depth at the special session of the General Assembly on children to be held in May next year, I should like here to expand on the aspects directly relating to the responsibilities of the Council.

First, we welcome the special child-related provisions that the Security Council has included in a number of its recent resolutions, particularly resolution 1355 (2001), renewing the mandate of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC), which contains a specific paragraph on child protection. It is indeed vital that these considerations be taken into account, first in dialogues for peace and the ensuing peace agreements and then in the mandates of United Nations peacekeeping operations and peace-building programmes where appropriate. We are thinking particularly of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes for child combatants and of the right of child refugees and internally displaced children to assistance and protection. It is also worth repeating that humanitarian personnel must have full, safe and unhindered access to children affected by armed conflict.

We warmly welcome the fact that child protection advisers and child-focused human rights officers are, where appropriate, to be part of the personnel of peacekeeping operations. This additional expertise will make for a deeper appreciation of the problems and, not least, enable us to adapt our action to the particular needs of each operation. In this context, we wish to recall that the special needs of girls must receive special attention.

Generally speaking, it is vital that all civilians and all military and police forces involved in peacekeeping operations receive training in children's rights, child protection and international humanitarian law.

But to be truly effective, we must also become involved in conflict prevention measures aimed particularly at children. In that regard, there is an urgent need to put a stop to the recruitment and use of children in armed conflicts, in violation of international law, including the obligations imposed by the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Allow me to remind the Council that that Protocol prohibits the participation of children under the age of 18 in armed conflicts. We look forward to its entry into force next February. I would also mention the Rome Statute, which makes it a war crime to recruit children under the age of 15.

As the Secretary-General's report stresses, the Security Council regularly deals with issues that directly or indirectly involve children: child soldiers, the question of small arms, HIV/AIDS and peacekeeping operations, the illicit exploitation of natural resources and conflict prevention. Wherever

necessary, the approach to all these problems must include a "child" dimension.

In conclusion, I wish to say that no peace can be lasting unless children are involved in its consolidation. The special session of the General Assembly on children is crucial in this respect. It represents a unique opportunity for all of us to pool our efforts to define a global strategy to promote and protect the rights of the child. Peace is without doubt the most precious possession that we can offer them, and this requires our unconditional voluntary commitment.

The President: The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Egypt. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Aboul Gheit (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*). Allow me at the outset to express my delegation's deep appreciation to you and your friendly country, Madam President, and to salute and thank Secretary-General Kofi Annan and his Special Representative, Mr. Olara Otunnu, for their tireless efforts and valuable contribution to the promotion of the rights of the child in armed conflict. I also wish to assure you of my country's full commitment in supporting all such efforts.

Caring for children's physical, mental and psychological development is a duty, as well as a social and economic necessity for all the countries of the world, regardless of their cultures and civilizations and of their level of economic growth and scientific advances. I have no doubt that the success of the 1990 World Summit for Children in setting a number of ambitious targets and objectives aimed at supporting children and development, and the ratification of the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child by 191 countries, gave clear evidence that the international community is committed and willing to respect the rights, capabilities, dignity and welfare of the child.

However, despite all the important achievements of the last decade, we have witnessed a number of factors that have adversely affected children in many areas of the world, such as economic crises, the deepening of debt and the spread of epidemics and diseases. The most dangerous of those factors is the spread of armed conflicts and the radical changes introduced to armed conflict in recent years, such as open disregard for rules of international law, particularly humanitarian law, and the permitting of all forms of abuse against civilians. This change in the nature of armed conflict has led to the aggravation of problems affecting children in armed conflict, regardless of the international efforts that have been made to prevent recruitment of children, release child soldiers and reunify them with their families, protect them from organized crime and promote their rehabilitation in and integration into their societies.

We, the people of the world, took it upon ourselves in the Charter to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war. But unfortunately, after more than 50 years have passed, armed conflicts are still killing, injuring and destroying children. Conflicts continue to kill millions of children who have become targets or tools of wars. We have witnessed the effects of conflict and post-conflict on children in more than 50 countries. Many have been killed, abducted or besieged, or maimed by anti-personnel landmines; the number of children whose mental, physical and psychological development has been impaired in war-torn societies continues to grow; and millions have lost their homes and families, not to mention their childhood, adolescence and school years. Some of them have been in a continuous state of shock because of the events they have witnessed.

While human rights covenants and conventions — including the Convention of the Rights of the Child and the 1949 Geneva Convention and its two Protocols of 1977 — represent landmarks in the protection of children in areas of armed conflict, the gap between these rules and their implementation continues to widen and grow in an unprecedented way. Although we believe that the main responsibility for bridging this gap and implementing international rules aimed at protecting children in armed conflicts lies above all with national Governments, we are also fully convinced that the international community has an important role to play in providing the necessary technical and financial support to protect, reintegrate and psychologically rehabilitate children.

In this regard, from this podium Egypt urges the international community to make all necessary efforts to carry out the following measures. First, it must ensure that all parties at war are committed to protecting children from exploitation, abuse, violence, rape, displacement and murder. Secondly, it should bring to justice all those who target children with impunity and implement and comply with the Optional

Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict.

Thirdly, the international community must strive to implement the Programme of Action adopted by the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, as it has positive effects on reducing conflicts and protecting civilians, especially women and children. Fourthly, it must mobilize and coordinate humanitarian relief efforts and respond to the developmental needs of children in the areas of education, health care and other social services in post-conflict situations in order to replace the culture of violence — in which children in areas of armed conflict have been raised — with a culture of peace and development. This should be done while ensuring full coordination and cooperation with the concerned countries and guaranteeing that the rights of children are not used as a pretext to interfere in a country's internal affairs or to politicize a specific crisis.

Finally, my delegation would like to affirm that Egypt will untiringly stress the need to protect children and promote their basic rights, including their right to life and development in areas and territories under foreign occupation. We wonder in this regard: is it not high time to halt all military and violent actions directed against civilians and children in the occupied Palestinian territories? Is it not time to put an end to the torture, tears and sorrow of Palestinian children, whose innocent lives the Israeli forces continue to take, without regard for moral, political or international commitments, while disregarding and flouting the cries for help and relief that they make? Today, as the Security Council is considering, for the second or the third time, the issue of protecting children in armed conflict, the Palestinian child is still living in very inhumane circumstances, which touches the conscience of the international community.

We believe that our duty, as part of a civilized world, and the role of the Security Council in the new millennium, is not only to express regret and remorse for the suffering and death of Palestinian children who may have been killed by a stray bullet or have lost those who once cared for them, or whose basic rights have been violated, but also to protect their lives and promote their rights, dignity and welfare.

Children are the future of our civilization and of every community. Their development, their protection and the promotion of their rights is a joint responsibility for us all. Future generations will harvest and reap the fruits of either war and violence or peace and development.

Mr. Navarrete (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to tell you at the outset how very grateful my delegation is to you, Madam, for having convened this open debate on children in armed conflict. I would also like to express our thanks for your outstanding personal contribution to our consideration of items related to children in the course of your work in the Preparatory Committee for the Special Session of the General Assembly on children.

In this connection, as previous speakers have remarked, the situation is as devastating as it is inadmissible. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict has said that in the past decade 2 million children have died in war. Six million have been seriously injured or permanently handicapped. Twelve million are homeless. More than 1 million children are orphans or separated from their families and 10 million suffer from profound psychological trauma.

For its part, the United Nations Children's Fund estimates that 300,000 minors have been recruited as active combatants in armies and rebel groups involved in more than 30 non-international conflicts and are often captured as prisoners of war.

Anti-personnel landmines also pose a great danger to the physical safety of children. Every month, 800 minors die or are mutilated by landmines. They are marked for life by amputations, the consequences of which affect their capacity to move about, work and live a normal life. The moving words of Alhaji Babah Sawaneh that we heard this morning provided a personal perspective and put a human face on such terrifying statistics.

In order to address such horrors, Mexico supports the recommendations of the Secretary-General, which consolidate and expand United Nations activities related to the situation of children in armed conflict. We agree with the Secretary-General's assessment that enhanced international cooperation and the political will of nations are needed in order to help everyone to meet their obligations to protect children in times of war and in post-conflict situations.

My country is firmly committed to consolidating international law in this sphere. On 30 June 2000, we ratified Convention No. 182 of the International Labour Organization on the worst forms of child labour. On 7 September 2000, we signed the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict. In the general debate of the General Assembly in New York, the President of Mexico announced that our ratification of that instrument is currently under way.

Mexico agrees on the importance of the Security Council's continuing to study information provided by humanitarian agencies on the situation of children in various regions of the world and of its adopting measures to ensure that parties to conflicts permit secure and unrestricted access to United Nations humanitarian personnel. Mexico also believes that it is highly important that humanitarian assistance be increased to children, that access to war-affected children be guaranteed in all regions and that prevention and support programmes be developed for children affected by HIV/AIDS.

Mexico believes that activities of the Security Council to protect children in armed conflict, together with measures to be adopted by States in the context of the commitments they will undertake at the special session on children, will enable the international community to meet the psychological, rehabilitation and social reintegration needs of children and to ensure their full enjoyment of their human rights.

One aspect to which Mexico attaches particular importance is the demobilization and reintegration programmes for child soldiers. Lessons learned in warfare and post-conflict situations have underscored the need to design specific programmes to address the problems of boys and girls involved in armed conflict. We support the Secretary-General's recommendations that Member States provide sustained and adequate resources to implement such programmes.

It is also essential that we keep in mind strategies to ensure the progress called for in this context in the road map towards the implementation of the Millennium Declaration. We must work towards the suggested objectives and, in particular, towards

> "securing state commitments to ending the use of children as soldiers, demobilizing and rehabilitating former child soldiers and taking into account the special needs of women and girls". (*A/56/326, para. 238*)

I conclude by affirming, in reiteration of the reference made by the representative of Colombia in this connection, our support for the recommendation on increasing restrictions on the transfer of small arms and light weapons to conflict zones. In addressing this problem, actions must be taken at the national, regional and international levels, such as those included in the Programme of Action on the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects, adopted in July by the General Assembly. Its effective implementation by Member States will have a significant impact on improving the protection of children in armed conflict.

The President: The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of the Republic of Korea. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Lee (Republic of Korea): I would like to begin by expressing my gratitude to you, Madam, for taking the initiative to bring this important issue before the Security Council. I would also like to thank the Secretary-General for his informative report on children and armed conflict, contained in document S/2001/852. Recalling the Security Council's landmark resolutions 1261 (1999) of 25 August 1999 and 1314 (2000) of 11 August 2000, and considering the upcoming special session of the General Assembly on children, I am certain that the outcome of our discussions here will add to the momentum generated at the ongoing preparatory process and contribute to the work of the special session.

Despite efforts to address the plight of children in conflict situations, the current reality remains deeply disturbing. In recent years, we have witnessed a surge in the number of armed conflicts and innocent civilians have been increasingly targeted. Among the many victims are women, children and members of other vulnerable groups. In this context, ensuring the protection of children and of women is more important than ever before.

Let me comment on some issues to which my delegation attaches particular importance.

First, it is noteworthy that there have been some encouraging developments in the effort to address the effects of armed conflict on children. With the adoption of resolution 1261 (1999), the issue of children in

armed conflict was placed on the peace and security agenda. As a result, child protection advisers are now deployed in peacekeeping operations and the roles of both the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and the United Nations Children's Fund have been strengthened.

In this regard, we welcome the two discussions on the issue of violence against children held by the Committee on the Rights of the Child, on 22 September 2000 and 28 September 2001. In particular, the Committee's recommendation that an in-depth study be conducted on violence against children deserves our close attention. The outcome of the workshop held last July in Florence, Italy, entitled "Filling knowledge gaps: a research agenda on the impact of armed conflict on children", could provide valuable guidelines for that study.

Secondly, we are of the view that, as the most universally accepted legal instrument, the Convention on the Rights of the Child should constitute the backbone of the legal framework for the protection and promotion of children's rights. We also welcome the adoption of two Optional Protocols to further protect children from armed conflict and prostitution. Through the adoption of these legal instruments, the international community has expressed its strong conviction that, in the twenty-first century, violations of the rights of children will not be tolerated.

Thirdly, despite these positive developments, the tasks that still lie ahead are tremendous. As mentioned in the report in document A/56/453, prepared by Mr. Olara Otunnu, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, gaps persist between international standards and the actual protection of children in the field. Children in many corners of the world continue to be killed, sexually abused and recruited into armed forces.

In this regard, we need to make every effort to finalize the outcome document for the special session on children, which includes a section on the protection of children in armed conflict. That section addresses a range of critical issues, such as the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict; the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict; the protection of refugee, unaccompanied and displaced children; and effective and adequate assistance to children affected by armed conflict.

Fourthly, particular attention should be paid to the education of children in armed conflict. International development and humanitarian agencies, Governments, local authorities and civil society organizations should make it a priority, during and after periods of armed conflict, to ensure that children are provided with educational materials and opportunities at both the primary and secondary levels.

To enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of this effort, it is imperative that local communities' capacity-building be further developed. In this regard, we appreciate the World Food Programme's recent participatory approach in adopting a food delivery method that requires parents to send their children to school in order to have food distributed to them.

Finally, we recognize that the primary responsibility for the prosecution of violations rests with national authorities. However, in cases where there are gross violations of the rights of children, it is important for Member States to collaborate in taking concrete steps to investigate, prosecute and impose sanctions upon individuals and groups involved in illegal trafficking in currency, arms and natural resources, which exacerbates armed conflict.

In closing, I would like to say that I am confident that today's debate will be fruitful and that all Member States will demonstrate the necessary political leadership and will to fight those who exploit children. This is a cause that concerns all of us, for children represent the hope and future of our world. The Republic of Korea is committed to ending the suffering inflicted on children in armed conflict and will support the international endeavour to this end with all possible means.

The President: The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Slovenia. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Petrič (Slovenia): Let me first express my sincere appreciation to you, Madam President, for convening this open debate on a subject which is especially dear to us, since Slovenia, as a non-permanent member of the Security Council at the time, had the privilege of contributing to the drafting, and of participating in the adoption, of the important resolution 1261 (1999), which recognized the protection and well-being of war-affected children as an important peace and security item.

We are pleased to see the significant progress that has been achieved in the past two years. The Security Council has played an active role in the protection of children in armed conflict and has paid special attention to children in its decision-making with regard to peacemaking, peacekeeping and peace-building operations. The Council also continued to play a crucial role in calling on parties to implement existing rules of international law that protect children in armed conflict. We are pleased that the new draft resolution, to be adopted today, takes into account action points highlighted in the report of the Secretary-General to further improve the well-being of children affected by armed conflict.

Slovenia associates itself with the statement delivered by Belgium on behalf of the European Union, and we fully endorse it. I would therefore like to briefly highlight one particular point only.

The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict has stressed one particular point on many occasions. He did so most recently when referring to the situation in Afghanistan, stating:

> "No peace is likely to be sustainable unless children and youth are provided with rehabilitation and hope, so that they become a constructive force in rebuilding their country. Only by doing what is right for children today can we build a solid foundation for peace and security tomorrow."

Following this idea, the Government of Slovenia, together with a non-governmental organization, Slovene Philanthropy, decided to launch an initiative called "Together: the Regional Centre for the Psychological Well-being of Children". Thus we have gone from worthy statements to real deeds.

By establishing and activating this centre, Slovenia, a small United Nations Member with limited resources, hopes to contribute to the well-being and improve the mental health of war-affected children, particularly in South-Eastern Europe. We believe that long-term social conciliation in the region will depend in particular on the psychological state of younger generations. We wish to share our expertise in the area of the mental health of children, as well as our profound understanding of the situation in the region and of the culture and traditions there. We would like to make available our knowledge and resources for the benefit of the children of the region. By establishing the centre, Slovenia, in cooperation with other interested countries and international and local partners, hopes to create an efficient framework to provide a comprehensive, continuous and organized approach to providing protection and assistance to traumatized children in South-Eastern Europe and, possibly, elsewhere.

Let me also reiterate Slovenia's recognition of and strong support for the work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Mr. Olara Otunnu. I also wish to express our recognition and strong support to the United Nations Children's Fund and to Ms. Bellamy personally, and to other United Nations agencies and organizations and non-governmental organizations which contribute expertise, resources and operational capacities for the well-being of children. Their activities and cooperation are crucial for truly ameliorating the plight of children. We also encourage continuous and meaningful dialogue between the Security Council, the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

Last but not least, we hope that the General Assembly's special session on children, which had to be postponed owing to the tragic events of 11 September, will resume in 2002 and will result in a new and ambitious agenda for our children.

The President: The next speaker is the representative of Japan. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Motomura (Japan): My delegation is grateful to the Security Council for providing us with an opportunity to address the important issue of children and armed conflict.

Children are our common treasures; they embody our dreams and our hopes. This is why, at the Millennium Summit last year, heads of State and Government made a firm commitment to

> "spare no effort to ensure that children ... that suffer disproportionately the consequences of natural disasters, genocide, armed conflicts and other humanitarian emergencies are given every assistance and protection so that they can resume normal life as soon as possible." *(Resolution 55/2, para. 26)*

Japan is deeply concerned that in recent armed conflicts, increasing numbers of civilians, including children, have been directly affected. In countless cases, children have been hurt, killed, or uprooted from their families and communities to become involved in conflicts as soldiers. According to the Secretary-General's report "We the Children", approximately 300,000 children are actively involved in armed conflicts as soldiers at present. Children are also being exploited, and we are particularly concerned about girls who are sexually abused. These children consequently suffer extreme trauma and psychosocial damage. In the light of this reality, Japan wishes to stress the importance of the international community's energetically tackling the issue in cooperation with local non-governmental organizations.

I would like to share with the members of the Security Council and the other participants in today's discussion some of the thoughts and initiatives of the Government of Japan regarding this subject.

First, children must be protected from all violence. The use of children as soldiers must be ended, and in post-conflict situations such children should be kept away from danger and cared for. The following are examples of post-conflict activities in which the Government of Japan has participated: a project to reduce small arms in post-conflict areas, such as Cambodia, as these weapons often create tremendous obstacles to social and economic development and are harmful to children; projects in many parts of the world to eliminate anti-personnel mines, which pose a great threat to children; and the Reactivation of Quality Primary Education in Kosovo project, which Japan has supported through the Trust Fund for Human Security. At school, children receive social rehabilitation attention, and trauma can be alleviated. Support for a project to reintegrate former child soldiers in Africa into society through the same fund is now under consideration.

Secondly, former child soldiers must be socially integrated. In this regard, in March this year, in collaboration with the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Mr. Olara Otunnu, the Government of Japan conducted a survey on reintegration of former child soldiers into society, whose results made clear the significant role that the community plays. Based on this survey, we believe that more efforts should be made by the international community to provide former child soldiers with access to basic and vocational education, and to establish a social safety net for physically handicapped, psychosocially traumatized or orphaned children. In addition, special measures need to be taken for sexually abused girl children in their communities.

Thirdly, the issue of the sexual abuse and exploitation of children in armed conflict, particularly girls, indeed calls for a stronger response. In order to strengthen the partnership in addressing the issue, it is necessary to raise awareness and share information among all the actors concerned. My delegation believes that the Second World Congress against the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children, to be held next month in Yokohama, Japan, will provide an opportunity to realize this goal, as armed conflict is one of the causes of the sexual abuse and exploitation of children. The Government of Japan strongly calls for high-level participation in the Congress by Member States so that we can address the plight of children.

Before concluding, I cannot fail to touch upon the situation of Afghan children. The Government of Japan would like to reiterate its support for Security Council resolution 1378 (2001), which calls upon all Afghan forces to refrain from acts of reprisal and to adhere strictly to their obligations under human rights instruments and international humanitarian law. In this connection, Japan welcomes the meeting to be held in Berlin next week to discuss the transitional administration to be established in Afghanistan in the near future. It is the hope of my delegation that that meeting, called for by Ambassador Brahimi, the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Afghanistan, will lead to the formation of a transitional administration that will serve as the basis for a truly broad-based Government conducive to the realization of well-being for the Afghan people, including children. We strongly call upon the Afghan parties to act to achieve this end as soon as possible.

Furthermore, Japan would like to call for special attention to be given to the situation of refugee and internally displaced children in and around Afghanistan, where the region's severe winter is about to begin. We must take action to ensure that humanitarian aid reaches those children, and that efforts for rehabilitation and reconstruction take fully into account the plight of children. Japan, for its part, will spare no effort to ensure that United Nations

agencies and non-governmental organizations are able to carry out their work effectively.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate our continuing commitment to working with the international community to respond to the issue of children and armed conflict, so that all children can grow up in a family environment, in an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding.

The President: The next speaker is the representative of South Africa. I invite her to take a seat at the Council table and to make her statement.

Ms. Ndhlovu (South Africa): My delegation would like to congratulate you, Madam President, on your stewardship of the Council for the month of November, and we wish to commend you for extending the Secretary-General's commitment to children by holding this, our third open debate on children and armed conflict. Once again, we are gathering to consider urgent measures on how to deal with the question of the exploitation of the world's children in situations of armed conflict.

The reports of the Secretary-General make key recommendations in the face of numbing statistics of child suffering, recruitment of child soldiers, child abduction, internal displacement, loss of parents, sexual abuse, particularly of girls, and the spread of HIV/AIDS. Similarly, the data of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) paint an horrific picture of children killed in armed conflict, with millions more injured, traumatized and orphaned.

We therefore commend the Security Council for its continued debate on the issue and, in this regard, refer to resolution 1314 (2000), adopted in August last year, calling upon the international community to condemn in the strongest possible terms the deliberate targeting of children in situations of armed conflict. The effective implementation of the resolution involves a willingness to find solutions to the plight of war-affected children, and my delegation supports the measures intended to protect them.

The consequences of war, acts of genocide, armed conflicts, family violence, international terrorism, organized crime, and trafficking in humans and drugs, as well as weapons of mass destruction and the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, have devastating consequences for children and a profound impact on their lives and their communities.

Children are generally susceptible to all forms of abuse and exploitation, the effects of which often shape and define their personalities in adult life. To recruit and lure children under false pretence to become soldiers is an affront to civilized values but also a fundamental impediment to socio-economic development.

The African continent has seen our children suffer indescribable atrocities. Many are victims of armed conflict or are forced to become soldiers. In Burundi, Angola, Sierra Leone and the Democratic Republic of the Congo children have been targets of violence and even, unwillingly, perpetrators of violence. Now, children in Afghanistan are facing the world through war and human rights abuse. The world's children are in desperate need of protection.

South Africa ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child and supports its two Optional Protocols on the involvement of children in armed conflict and on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. We have also ratified the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child without any reservation.

The Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict establishes 18 years as the minimum age for participation in hostilities and prohibits recruitment of persons under 18 years. In addition, the Protocol bans all compulsory recruitment of children under eighteen. South Africa amended its own legislation in 1999 when the Minister of Defence raised the age of voluntary enlistment in the armed forces from 17 to 18 years. Currently, our Parliament is working towards ensuring our speedy ratification of the Protocol.

We have also brought our voice into the deliberations to finalize the draft outcome document "A World Fit for Children" in preparation for the special session of the General Assembly on children due in May next year, in particular on the issue of children in armed conflict. We hope that renewed commitment at the highest political level during the special session will ensure that many of the sentiments of Security Council resolutions 1314 (2000) and 1261 (1999) will be fulfilled. We can no longer continue to fail the children of the world.

Furthermore, South Africa supports the provisions of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court and International Labour Organization

Convention No. 182, concerning the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour. These instruments deserve our full support because they offer internationally recognized recourse to ensure the protection of children in armed conflict. However, formidable challenges remain. The impact of HIV/AIDS will profoundly affect family structures. International development targets for reducing infant and under-five mortality rates in Africa remain illusive goals. Chronic poverty, lack of affordable medical interventions to reduce the risk factors associated with the mother-to-child transmission of HIV/AIDS, and high levels of unemployment add to the problem.

The Government of South Africa remains determined to address these problems and is eager to work with other Governments, multilateral institutions and the United Nations to ensure the effective enforcement of the relevant United Nations instruments with regard to the rights of the child. This includes our intention to sign and ratify the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict and to encourage other countries to ratify key international treaties, conventions and protocols.

Commitments on paper and Security Council debates remain a necessary but insufficient condition for saving children from the scourge of armed conflict and from being abused in order to further the war aims of unscrupulous adults. While the consideration of this important subject in the Council raises its political profile, the Security Council needs to take a lead in establishing the parameters of acceptable conduct with regard to children in armed conflict situations.

The Council can act with a view to monitoring and ensuring compliance with current Council resolutions; improving communication and coordination with other United Nations organs and authoritative bodies involved in the protection of civilians, particularly children; ensuring that the post-conflict environment nurtures the rights and needs of children, including rehabilitation, which is integral to future stability and development; and ensuring that the it takes an integrated and interdisciplinary approach and gives due consideration to the rights of children when considering peacekeeping operations.

We should therefore remain constantly vigilant for signs of abuse. We stand ready to exert pressure where it is necessary. We should also encourage recalcitrant parties to adhere to the letter and the spirit of those international instruments that provide the most basic and appropriate protection of the rights of the child in situations of armed conflict.

Our children have a right to live in peaceful situations in a world without wars. This should be our legacy to their future. Children are the most universally treasured gifts to parents in all societies, yet they are the most vulnerable members of our modern and conflict-ridden societies.

We appeal to all nations to nurture and protect children so that they may be able to build a better world for themselves and their own children. Children in South Africa played a pivotal role in transforming our country into a democratic order. It is just possible that children, given the chance, will be the ones to work the miracle of reconciliation in the world.

In closing, my delegation would like to take this opportunity to express our appreciation for the continued and committed efforts by Ms. Carol Bellamy of UNICEF and Mr. Olara Otunnu, the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, to ensure that we all remain seized of the plight of children caught up in conflict globally. We also thank Alhaji Babah Sawaneh for his moving personal account of the life of a child soldier in Sierra Leone. We welcome the Council's intention to adopt a resolution on children in armed conflict after this meeting.

The President: The next speaker on my list is the representative of Canada, whom I invite to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Heinbecker (Canada) *(spoke in French)*: First and foremost, I would like to thank you, Madam President, for having requested this public debate on children and armed conflict. I know to what extent you personally are interested in this matter. You and I both witnessed the devastating consequences of armed conflict on children in Sierra Leone.

The events of the last two months have reminded us all how important it is to protect civilians, more specifically, children, and they have also reminded us that this task is highly relevant to the work of the Council. Peace is only possible if we give priority to human security.

I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his detailed and far-sighted report on children and armed conflict. He emphasizes the fact that despite laudable progress achieved, thanks to efforts made

recently, the task of the Council in this respect is far from over.

(*spoke in English*)

Security Council resolutions 1261 (1999) and 1314 (2000) on children and armed conflict have outlined the steps to be taken, the actors to be engaged and the mechanisms to be used to increase the protection of the rights of war-affected children and their communities. We commend the Council for acting on these guidelines with respect to the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Sierra Leone. We need now to focus more systematically on further implementation of these provisions in the two landmark resolutions.

Doing so requires significant political will and significant resources. The Secretary-General was right to highlight this inescapable reality in his recommendations throughout the report.

We welcome the adoption today by the Council of this further, very significant resolution on this issue, responding to the Secretary-General's recommendations and reaffirming the Council's commitment to protect children.

I would also like to congratulate Mr. Otunnu, the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, and the United Nations Children's Fund, in partnership with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other United Nations agencies, for integrating child protection into the peace and security agenda. In particular, we encourage the United Nations agencies to continue their efforts to improve training on children's rights for United Nations staff and to evaluate the lessons learned from the incorporation of child protection into peacekeeping operations despite the meagre resources at their disposal to do so.

We need to continue to cooperate with NGOs on the front lines of protecting children. In this regard, we welcome the establishment of the NGO "watchlist" on children and armed conflict. This initiative should improve protection for the rights of children in specific situations of armed conflict through better monitoring, better reporting and better follow-up action before, during and after conflicts.

In September 2000, Canada hosted in Winnipeg an International Conference on War-Affected Children. Many of you who are here today were present at that Conference, and you will remember that it brought together over 1,500 delegates — including representatives of Governments, NGOs, United Nations agencies and young people themselves — many of whom have had first-hand experience with children in armed conflict. The priorities for action outlined in Winnipeg have had beneficial effects here. For example, one of the promising outcomes of last summer's United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons was its recognition of the devastating impact of small arms on children.

Progress on child protection extends well beyond the United Nations, of course. The Economic Community of West African States has established a child-protection unit within its secretariat; such measures, I see, are called for in the resolution itself. We believe that this is a potentially very important initiative, and we hope it will serve as a model for other regional organizations for integrating child protection into their work.

It has been over a year since the Assembly adopted the Optional Protocol to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Many States have subsequently signed this new instrument, and 11 others have ratified it, moving us closer to a global ban on the use of child soldiers. We encourage all Governments present here to sign and ratify the Protocol. Its universal ratification and implementation are important steps for the protection of children.

One of the most pernicious violations of children's rights is the abduction, conscription and use of children in armed conflict. Human Rights Watch reports that earlier this month more than 100 primary school students were abducted to serve as soldiers by the Burundian rebel movement "Forces for the Defence of Democracy". Forces for the Defence of Democracy: using child soldiers in its interpretation of democracy! While several students escaped, dozens remain in rebel hands. We call upon the perpetrators to release the children, and we call upon the Council to condemn this crime and to punish its authors.

Finally, a word about Graça Machel's report, "The Impact of Armed Conflict on Children". The Government of Canada, along with the Government of Norway, helped commission the Machel review, an update of Mrs. Machel's ground-breaking 1996 study. In it, she clearly reminds us all that there is still much to be done to fulfil our promises to each other and to the children.

Next spring's special session on children will be an important opportunity for us all to redeem those promises. Let us together guarantee that the special session will strengthen our commitment to children and protect them. Let us progressively establish a new and humane international norm of behaviour: no more child soldiers.

The President: The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Iraq, whom I invite to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Aldouri (Iraq) *(spoke in Arabic)*: On behalf of my delegation, Madam Chairman, I would like to congratulate you on presiding over the work of the Council this month. We are convinced that you will be able to direct its work with the wisdom we know you possess. My delegation would also like to thank you for having convened this public meeting devoted to the question of children and armed conflict. This is a subject of paramount importance in today's tumultuous world.

We believe that your interest in children, your experience and the fact that you presided over the Preparatory Committee for the Special Session on Children will make it possible to achieve concrete results. Nor can I fail to thank Mr. Olara Otunnu, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, for the presentation of his report and for his efforts in this area. I very much wish that, when he presented his report, he had referred to the children of Palestine or of Iraq, particularly since he quite correctly referred to the children of Africa, particularly of Sierra Leone, and to the children of Afghanistan. May I also thank the Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), who has been making very sincere efforts. In fact, the children of Iraq have witnessed the sincerity of her efforts over the last 10 years.

Since we are taking up this important issue, it should be noted that what we are trying to do here is to carry out one of the most important tasks entrusted to the United Nations. In fact, that task is referred to in the Charter: "to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war". As children are the most vulnerable group in any society, it is quite natural that they should be the first to be affected by armed conflict. Despite all the efforts that have been made by the international community for several decades to lay solid foundations of international law to protect civilians in armed conflict, and children in particular — efforts that have led to a number of international instruments and numerous declarations governing the conduct of combatants and providing protection for the most vulnerable members of society — we unfortunately continue to see indifference towards children on the part of certain people and even States. Children are even being deliberately targeted, which is a flagrant violation of international conventions and instruments, as well as an undeniable international crime.

My delegation would like once again to emphasize that the Security Council's addressing this matter is a very positive sign. However, this should not prevent us from dealing with this issue in a broader and more appropriate forum in which all States are represented on an equal footing, namely, in the General Assembly.

Because of the existing balance of power, the Security Council has become incapable of dealing with a number of cases of armed conflict. In fact, it has even become the cause of a number of armed conflicts, thereby subjecting children to suffering and daily dislocation, starvation, bombings, killings and other acts of aggression that have deprived them of the most basic rights, particularly the right to life. The situation of children in Iraq, Palestine and numerous other parts of the world provides but a few striking examples of this. Iraqi children were the first victims of the military aggression by the United States and its allies against Iraq in 1991. In the course of that aggression, over 88,000 tons of bombs were dropped, striking civilian targets and our infrastructure: roads, bridges, hospitals, schools, water purification plants, electric power stations and so on.

All this has had a devastating impact on children, both directly and indirectly; to say nothing of the use of depleted uranium, which led to birth defects, leukaemia and great suffering for children. At the time, the United Nations simply stood by as a spectator of an aggression that caused tens of thousands of child victims and that continues to produce victims. Before and after that aggression, the United States imposed an unprecedentedly comprehensive sanctions regime on an entire people in the name of the United Nations.

According to a UNICEF report published in August 1999, those overall sanctions led to the deaths of 500,000 Iraqi children under the age of 5 between 1991 and 1998. As of today, the number of civilian

victims resulting from the sanctions against Iraq has reached over 1.6 million, most of them children. The sanctions are killing 5,000 Iraqi children monthly. The least one can say about this is that it is a crime of genocide being experienced today with the full knowledge of the Security Council. Despite all this, the United Nations is still incapable of providing even the slightest explanation as to why these sanctions that are killing children every day continue to be in place.

As if that vengeance were not enough, the United States and the United Kingdom continue to take revenge on the Iraqi people, including children, despite the norms of international law and the United Nations Charter. Both those States have imposed no-fly zones in the northern part of Iraq since 1991. Those zones were extended to the south of Iraq in 1992. American military planes are daily bombing civilian targets in Iraq, killing children, causing terror in villages and towns, burning agricultural land and destroying schools. Despite the entire international community's condemnation of those daily acts of terrorist aggression, and despite the statement made by the United Nations to the effect that a no-fly zone constituted a unilateral use of force against a sovereign State, the Security Council and the United Nations do not appear to be in a position to end that aggression and terrorism.

The Palestinian people is also subject to occupation and oppression. Their lands have been usurped. Their villages and towns have been destroyed and are under siege. All of this is happening without the United Nations making any attempt to take any concrete steps against the Zionist entity, the main perpetrator of that aggression or against Zionist terrorism, which mows down Palestinian children. Those children are suffering from very serious psychological trauma, which has a severe impact on their future.

We have chosen to refer exclusively to these two situations by way of example to emphasize that the United Nations and the international community are still far from achieving their objective of fully respecting duties and commitments entered into for the protection of children in conflict and post-conflict situations. The United Nations still has a great deal to do in order to stop, bring to justice and punish those who perpetrate violence and violate the rights of children. We refer primarily to those who use the machinery of the United Nations to target children and who exert pressure to prevent the United Nations from playing its proper role in the protection of children.

We would also have liked the draft resolution that is now before the Security Council, and which we learned of only a few hours ago, to have contained some provisions about children under foreign occupation, or those under the effects of embargo.

We would have also preferred it had the Council not been so abominably selective, once again, due to certain pressures.

The President: The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Israel. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Lancry (Israel): On behalf of my Government, I wish to express our satisfaction at the convening of this debate. Protection of the rights of the child, particularly in areas of conflict, has been a matter of concern to the international community for some time. This concern stems from our recognition that childhood is a period of innocence and dreams, and yet, all too often, the harsh realities of war and unrest have denied children the right to grow and develop in a nurturing environment of peace and stability.

Israel wishes to thank the Secretary-General for his excellent report on children and armed conflict, and for the many insightful and important recommendations contained therein for protecting and defending the rights of the child.

The situation of children in areas of conflict is one of the most heart-wrenching issues we address in the United Nations. The images of suffering that we have all seen emerge from virtually every corner of the earth. The manner in which so many children around the world are taken from their homes and schools, physically and emotionally abused, and forced to fight in wars they did not start is a matter that must be of concern to all of us.

The international community has repeatedly affirmed that children must be spared the horrors of armed conflict. The Secretary-General's report offers important recommendations, first and foremost among which is adherence to the relevant international conventions, which, if they were widely respected, would almost entirely solve the problem of children in armed conflict.

In our region, children have suffered terribly from decades of conflict and from the still-looming threat of terrorism. The Middle East has endured more than its share of wars, which have left scars on all people in the region, but particularly on children.

For these reasons, Israel has supported international initiatives aimed at protecting children from the devastation of armed conflict, including the landmark Convention on the Rights of the Child. Israel's accession to the Convention was followed by the adoption of "Basic Law: Human Dignity and Liberty", a law that ensured that the rights of the child were guaranteed constitutional protection. The adoption of that law sparked a flurry of judicial and legislative activity that broadened and extended the commitment of Israeli society to the principles of the Convention.

Our Foreign Minister, Mr. Shimon Peres, who was in New York last week for the general debate, signed the Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, and on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, signifying Israel's enduring commitment to preserving the innocence of youth, as part of a fundamental right enjoyed by all children. Israel's becoming a signatory to the Optional Protocols is sure to inspire yet more revisions to Israeli legislation.

The report of the Secretary-General contained in document S/2000/712 correctly draws attention to the importance of education and to its potential for use and misuse in times of conflict. The report refers to separate curriculums that must be unified, and, in paragraph 46, to "distinct history lessons... [that] obstruct long-term reconciliation". It draws attention to the phenomenon whereby schools are used as recruitment centres and teachers are instructed to convince children of the nobility and glory of war and martyrdom.

The significance of these factors cannot be underestimated. Children who are taught to hate and to embrace death and violent struggle will not grow up to be responsible adults prepared to live in peace and to resolve differences peacefully.

They will, instead, believe in the power and virtue of force and violence. Conflicts will be perpetuated in every corner of the globe if teaching the next generation the skills it needs to succeed in the world is supplanted by indoctrination into endless struggle. When it comes to the education of our children, we must take a long view of the situation and consider their well-being and the nature of the society they will inherit.

The scars that war and terror inflict on children are immeasurable and can result in psychological problems and antisocial behaviour long after the conflict has ended. Children will be truly sheltered from the horrors of war only when terrorism comes to an end and they are no longer viewed as pawns in a larger struggle.

In this respect, I would like to express my regret that the Permanent Representative of Egypt, speaking about the plight of Palestinian children, did not find it necessary to utter a single word of concern about the dozens of Israeli children decimated by Palestinian terrorism this last year. The 23 Israeli children and adolescents savagely assassinated by a Palestinian suicide bomber last June in the Dolphinarium discotheque attack in Tel-Aviv were totally ignored by the Permanent Representative of Egypt, as if this horrific event had never occurred. That is only one dramatic example in a series of gruesome carnages in which scores of Israeli children met their deaths. The fact is that Israel deeply regrets any harm to civilians, both Israeli and Palestinian, but especially to children, who should be kept in school rather than on the front lines of conflict.

I should also like to remind the Permanent Representative of Egypt that those who incite others to violence, encourage extremism and tolerate the most vile anti-Semitic rhetoric in their official media also bear responsibility for the abuse of Palestinian children and the continued suffering on both sides.

In closing, I would like to reaffirm our position that the protection of children in armed conflict is best achieved by ending armed conflict. Our attempts to protect the lives and well-being of our children cannot be separated from our broader efforts to ensure that peace, security and prosperity extend to every region of the world.

Promoting peaceful means for the resolution of conflicts, widening educational opportunities and teaching our children to value life and the lives of others will protect not only our children but all of us from the horrors of war.

The President: The next speaker is the representative of Nigeria. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Adekanye (Nigeria): Nigeria is pleased to participate in today's Council debate on children and armed conflict. We are delighted to see Jamaica presiding over yet another open debate of the Security Council on the well-being of children during and after armed conflict. My delegation appreciates the efforts of the Council in keeping the issue of children on its agenda. Let me also recall with appreciation, Madam President, your role as Chairperson of the Preparatory Committee for the Special Session of the General Assembly on Children: the 10-year review of the outcome of the World Summit for Children.

The story that Alhaji Babah Sawaneh told the Council this morning was a graphic presentation of the challenges facing child soldiers during and after conflicts, especially in the African region. But the story also pointed to the urgency of remedial action by the international community to translate into action the shared commitment to protect children in armed conflict. In that regard, we thank the Secretary-General for his statement and for his report (S/2001/852). We also welcome the detailed statement to the Council of the Special Representative of the Secretary General, Mr. Olara Otunnu, whose clear advocacy and concern for children caught in conflict are shared by the Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), Ms. Carol Bellamy. We thank them all for their engagement on this issue.

We are gratified to note that today's debate is the fourth the Council has had on the issue of children and armed conflict. That is pursuant to resolutions 1261 (1999) and 1314 (2000), and it underscores the Council's commitment and its resolve to address the issue of children in conflict on account of its relevance to international peace and security.

The need for action cannot be overemphasized. Children who are traumatized by the experience of war are scarred for life, both physically and psychologically. Because they are made to serve as child soldiers, they may grow up to embrace violence unless they are properly rehabilitated. The case of girls is even worse, as they are vulnerable to sexual abuse, rape and addiction; they are also exposed to HIV/AIDS and other infectious diseases.

The international community therefore cannot afford to stand aloof in the face of this deplorable situation. A conducive atmosphere in which children can develop must be created. In our region, a number of initiatives have been taken to address the problem, as part of a broad commitment to enhancing the social, economic and cultural well-being of women and children. These include the establishment of a child protection unit within the Economic Community of West African States last April to protect and enhance the rights of children caught in conflict situations in the West African subregion.

Undoubtedly, the Convention on the Rights of the Child provides us with the most comprehensive instrument for strengthening the rights of children affected by armed conflict. It is noteworthy that, as we learned from the statement of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, the Optional Protocol to the Convention will enter into force next February. However, ratifications of the Convention and of the Protocol are not enough; they should be backed by concrete action. Nigeria is committed to the implementation of those and other relevant instruments.

We welcome the increased level of cooperation and partnerships among Governments, non-governmental organizations and civil society to provide education, training and humanitarian relief to affected children. It is imperative that the rehabilitation of war-affected children be sustained and properly completed so as to facilitate their integration into society. There is also a need to ensure the provision of adequate resources for ongoing United Nations peacekeeping missions to enable them to carry out demobilization and rehabilitation programmes. We also encourage the establishment of child protection units and the inclusion of monitoring provisions in United Nations peacekeeping and peace-building mandates.

Finally, it is our hope that war-affected children throughout the world — and especially in Rwanda, Sierra Leone and Angola — will find in the draft resolution on which the Council will be taking action at the end of this debate the support and sustenance they deserve.

The President: The next speaker is the representative of Malaysia. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Hasmy (Malaysia): At the outset, Madam President, allow me to congratulate you and the other members of the Council on once again convening an open debate on the important issue of children and armed conflict. I would also like to thank the Secretary-General for his report (S/2001/852) on children and armed conflict and for the recommendations he made in that report.

In today's wars, children have become increasingly involved both as targets of violence and as combatants. It is estimated that more than 500,000 children have been recruited as combatants in 87 countries. At least 300,000 are actively participating in conflicts and are directly involved in combat in 41 countries. Although most child soldiers are between 15 and 18 years old, others are as young as 7.

The world leaders who gathered at the 1990 World Summit for Children committed themselves, among other things, to taking political action at the highest level to protect children from the scourge of war and to take measures to prevent further armed conflict. The Secretary-General has rightly observed, and we entirely agree with him, that the best way to address the problem of children in armed conflict is to prevent armed conflict from occurring in the first place. Hence his emphasis on the promotion of a culture of peace and prevention.

Children have been used in support services and even as soldiers throughout history. However, the rise in intra-State conflict has exacerbated the conditions, such as internal displacement, refugee flight and the separation of families, that are most likely to pressure a child to become a soldier. It is thus impossible to make a distinction between a forced and a voluntary child soldier. Some children join armed groups for food, survival or to avenge atrocities in their communities; others have been physically abducted for war by armed groups.

Children commonly start out in support roles but often end up on the front lines of combat, planting or detecting landmines or participating in first-wave assaults. Often plied with drugs and given promises of food, shelter and security, child soldiers are at times forced to commit atrocities against other armed groups and civilian populations, including sometimes their own families and communities.

The use of children in armed conflict is greatly facilitated by an estimated 500 million small arms and light weapons worldwide. These weapons are inexpensive and are durable, small, lightweight, easy to maintain and small enough for a 10-year-old to handle. Illegal arms trafficking and poor monitoring of the legal trade make it easy for nearly anyone to obtain these weapons and to put them into the hands of children.

That being the case, the protection of children in armed conflict should be all encompassing. They should be assured of their physical security, as well as provided with legal protection under international law. We cannot deny the fact that in many conflict situations, the most vulnerable members of the population, particularly women and children, are targeted with impunity. My delegation is of the firm conviction that there should be no leniency or amnesty for crimes against innocent children. At the same time, we have to be humane in dealing with children who are manipulated by unscrupulous adults to take part in armed conflicts, as in the tragic case of the children of Sierra Leone.

My delegation also condemns in the strongest terms the use of rape as a deliberate weapon in warfare. The spread of a practice that degrades women and children must not be tolerated. It must be condemned in the strongest terms. We agree entirely with the call by the Secretary-General for sexual violence against women and children to continue to be prosecuted as a war crime, and with the Statute of the International Criminal Court, which designates rape as both a crime against humanity and a war crime.

My delegation commends the excellent work being carried out by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the Offices of the United Nations High Commissioners for Refugees and for Human Rights, as well as Ambassador Olara Otunnu, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, in drawing attention to the problem and improving the condition of children affected by situations of armed conflict. While we appreciate their enormous efforts in working with Governments to improve the lives of children everywhere, we are concerned with what we perceive to be gaps in the protection of children, particularly those in the Middle East.

We are of the view that in order to have any meaningful discussion of this subject, the issue of the Middle East must be addressed. Between the paralysis

of the Security Council on the Middle East issue and the focus by the Special Representative on situations of armed conflict predominantly in Africa, the plight of Palestinian children and children under foreign occupation seems all but forgotten. It is a sad state of affairs indeed when we ignore the suffering of these children merely because we cannot find a political solution to the problem of the Middle East. Should the issue be one of lack of mandate, then my delegation suggests that this be looked into and remedied without delay.

One must not quibble over issues of mandate when children become victims of an ongoing conflict, as is clearly the case in the occupied Palestinian territory, where out of some 800 Palestinians killed and over 20,000 wounded since September last year, a very high proportion comprises children. According to a UNICEF official based in Arab Jerusalem, Israel has arrested more than 600 children since September last year, sometimes holding them in harsh conditions.

Another area of concern to my delegation is the plight of children suffering under sanctions. Being the blunt instruments that they are despite efforts to make them more targeted, sanction regimes have the most debilitating effect on children. Reports of United Nations specialized agencies and non-governmental organizations have highlighted the catastrophic effects the comprehensive sanctions imposed on Iraq have had, claiming the lives of more than 1.5 million people, mostly children. It is shocking and scandalous that, according to UNICEF, half a million children under the age of five could have been saved had sanctions not been imposed on Iraq.

Child and maternal mortality in that country has increased many times over, ranking among the highest in the world. If the United Nations does not want to be further stigmatized by the dire plight of children in Iraq, immediate steps must be taken to end their suffering. My delegation has persistently called for the immediate review and lifting of comprehensive sanctions. We would urge that all future sanctions — if they need to be invoked at all as a necessary measure of last resort — should be imposed only after an in-depth and careful study of their potential impact on civilians, especially children.

My delegation welcomes the imminent entry into force of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict with its tenth ratification, by New Zealand on Monday, 12 November 2001. It is the fervent hope of my delegation that the Optional Protocol will hugely advance our fight to end the use of children as soldiers. We recommend all Member States to become parties. For our part, Malaysia is closely and actively studying the provisions of the Optional Protocol, with a view to its signature.

The President: I shall now give the floor to Mr. Olara Otunnu for brief closing remarks.

Mr. Otunnu: Given the late hour, my remarks will be very brief. I thank you, Madam President, and all the members of the Council for this debate. I have taken note of the critique, the comments and the proposals by members, and I shall do everything within my power to act on them.

Secondly, I want to say that the mandate that has been entrusted to me concerns the fate of children in all situations of armed conflict.

Let me say, thirdly, that all of us, especially within the international community, cannot discriminate among children affected by armed conflict, regardless of their geographic location or the political circumstance in which they may be, which is the reason why I said this morning that all the children are waiting for the same thing — redemption songs.

I have also taken note of the tremendous desire on the part of Council members to see the gap between words and deeds narrowed, and I hope that the next time we return to this debate in the Council there may be some concrete, even if modest, steps, made to try to bridge this gap.

Finally, I want to say that I have taken note of the wish of the Council to see a particular focus on Afghanistan. I shall be working very closely with UNICEF and other colleagues within the United Nations system and the leadership of Ambassador Brahimi to make this indeed an example of a more comprehensive and proactive response to the needs and the rights of children.

Once again I thank the Council. I thank the Council very much for allowing Alhaji Babah Sawaneh to address the Council on this occasion. It has been a historic day.

The President: I now give the floor to Ms. Carol Bellamy for her closing remarks.

Ms. Bellamy: I, too, will be brief. I would like to begin first by saying on behalf of UNICEF that we really appreciate the opportunity to participate, and to participate with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. I think the partnership that we have developed over the last several years is an increasingly strong one and one that, from UNICEF's perspective, we appreciate very much and we hope that we complement each other in the work that we do.

I would just like to briefly express my appreciation for the Council's strong commitment to address child protection issues and to integrate the child dimension into all its deliberations — whether on thematic issues such as small arms and light weapons and HIV/AIDS, or more country-specific issues such as the collaboration between peacekeepers and the United Nations country teams, the need for better information on the situations of children or better monitoring and reporting on violations.

I would also like to acknowledge the positive response to Alhaji's participation. I hope this augurs well for the potential of involving children and young people themselves in the work of the Council. I also wish, as an aside, to apologize for returning a bit late in the afternoon. Anyone who had been with me would have seen his good form on the football field as he participated in the announcement today of the partnership between the International Federation of Association Football (FIFA) and UNICEF during the 2002 World Cup, which will be held in Japan and Korea.

I also wish to state my appreciation for the continued high-level importance that the Council attaches to the special session on children, which will indeed be held and be even more special than ever, we hope. We also hope that the portion of the outcome document devoted to the issue of children affected by conflict will be strong and clear in its final presentation.

We recognize the importance that the Council has attributed to the adoption of the Optional Protocol, education and the need for a special focus on girls.

Finally, I would just like to conclude by saying we also recognize that this is not the first time that the Security Council has considered these issues. This is about the fourth time, at least, that there has been a clear recognition that the well-being of the world's children is indeed a matter of global security. But we would urge that the broad consensus on children affected by conflict, which is reflected in the strong draft resolution, be applied in the Security Council's response to specific country situations.

The President: There are no further speakers on my list. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The Security Council will remain seized of the matter.

The meeting was adjourned at 6.25 p.m.